THE ELEMENTS OF DRAMATIC CRITICISM.

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ELEMENTS

OF

DRAMATIC CRITICISM.

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THE ELEMENTS OF DRAMATIC CRITICISM.

CONTAINING

An *Analyſis* of the STAGE under the following Heads,

TRAGEDY,
TRAGI-COMEDY,
COMEDY,
} { PANTOMIME, and FARCE.

With a SKETCH of the EDUCATION

Of the GREEK and ROMAN ACTORS;

Concluding with

Some GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

For ſucceeding

In the ART of ACTING.

By WILLIAM COOKE, Eſq;
Of the Middle Temple.

Singula quæque locum teneat ſortita decentem,

Hor. de Art. Poet.

LONDON:
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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

TO

DAVID GARRICK, Esq;

Sir,

AS every subject which leads to the further elucidation of the drama, necessarily claims the protection of its ablest *practical commentator*, I shall make no apology for inscribing this book to you.

DEDICATION.

It would be a tireſome truth, to detain you here with a repetition of thoſe praiſes, which your abilities have demanded from the public; abſtracted from this, I am ſatisfied I could derive no credit, as a writer, from the attempt; every avenue to novelty on this ſubject being ſo juſtly anticipated. Thus narrowed in the walk of a dedicator---I have only to offer you my *admiration*, which, though you have long ſince had it from me in the ſhout of the public, permit me, to repeat it more par-

particularly here, by ſub-ſcribing myſelf,

Much your admirer,

and moſt obedient

humble ſervant,

WILLIAM COOKE.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN an age, when, with every ſpecies of polite literature, the elements of the drama ſeem to be ſo univerſally underſtood, any additional elucidation on the ſubject may appear vague, and unneceſſary. Dramatic writing, together with dramatic criticiſm, are not as formerly regulated by the *few* of *many* ages, who drew their knowledge from much reading, and obſervation.—they now aſſume a wider domain: *Modern poets* and *modern critics*, ſtart up in ſuch abundance, and come fitted for theſe offices ſo entirely *by the light of nature*, that a perſon who decided upon our dramatic

matic knowledge by the catalogue of our dramatic works, muſt not only turn from antiquity with contempt, but pronounce us at this day, the moſt poliſhed, and informed people in this department, of any upon earth.

But there are periods in arts, that when they are moſt followed, they are leaſt underſtood. This happens to be, at preſent, the caſe of our drama; though *ſeemingly* ſurrounded with ſo many guardians, theſe very guardians have produced *two* ſorts of enemies, who have perhaps degraded it much below any ſituation ſince its eſtabliſhment in this country. The firſt—a feeble — common-place morality, which has neither knowledge, character, or genius, for its ſupport; — the ſecond, a raw unprincipled criticiſm, the ſpawn of ſo flimſy a parent. Hence rules are deſpiſed, becauſe not ſtudied;

ranks

ranks confounded, becauſe not known; and great maſters inſulted through an indolence, or incapacity of receiving their inſtructions.

To reſcue the miſguided part of the public from ſuch *little law-givers*, and ſettle the knowledge of the ſtage on ſome more reſpectable, and permanent foundation, has been my attempt in the following ſheets; wherein I have endeavoured to go through a regular analyſis of the drama, from its nobleſt and moſt inſtructive heights, to its humbleſt and moſt irregular walks;—a ſubject, however *partly* treated of by ſome of the ableſt, and oldeſt critics in moſt languages, yet never (at leaſt in the courſe of my reading, or enquiries) given in this regular order.

At the ſame time, that I claim the *novelty* of this attempt, the aſſiſtance

ſiſtance of many of thoſe critics, is my greateſt boaſt; as vain would be my taſk, and imperfect my labours, did I preſume ſingly on the credit of my abilities, in deciding on points which have taken up ſo much of the joint reſearches of the learned. I am ſatisfied with working after ſuch great originals, happy if I am able to arrange their matter with preciſion, connect their obſervations with judgement, and in giving a *wholeneſs* to the deſign, not deſtroy the vigour of its component parts.

This general confeſſion then, I hope will preclude me the vanity of a DICTATOR, whilſt it will reſcue me from the character of a *plagiary*; particularly, when I previouſly declare, that thoſe paſſages which I have made uſe of from other authors,

thors, and which I have not individually reſtored, were only done to avoid a multiplicity of references, which, in my opinion, too often *divide*, rather than aſſiſt the attention of the reader. In ſhort, I have endeavoured with no inconſiderable attention, and induſtry, to form a work compoſed of ſuch principles as may be thought well arranged, and properly digeſted; and in this view—*uſeful* and *entertaining*. If I ſhould be diſappointed, I ſhall not however, have that ſuperſtition for my authorities, as to take the whole fault upon myſelf, nor ſo much complaiſance for myſelf, as not to attribute ſomething to my own defects.

The latter part of this work, "*Inſtructions for ſucceeding in the art of acting*,"—claims a greater ſhare

ſhare of indulgence from the public, as in this I ſtand entirely *alone*; merely from not having ſuch aſſiſtance as I could wiſh to avail myſelf of; moſt writers upon this ſubject, having been too rambling, or too impracticable theoriſts, to afford uſeful inſtructions. The deſire, however, of perfecting a work on the drama—induced me to extend it *with this part*; as it need not be inſiſted on here, how intimately the buſineſs of the poet, and actor, ſhould be connected, and how much it depends on the abilities of the latter, to give *perſuaſion* and *eclat* to the former.

To conclude.—I have beſtowed as much care, and obſervation, on the ſeveral parts of this work, as an avocation from greater purſuits would permit; my object being to convince

convince the public, that neither the *dictatorial air*, of moſt of our modern dramatiſts, nor the *falſe taſte* which gives them a *temporary palm*, are indications of real genius, or a fundamental knowledge of their art. Let me be permitted to ſay, at the ſame time, I have a greater object in my view,—a wiſh to be foremoſt, in recovering the theatre from ſuch *uſurpers*, and reſtoring it to that reſpectable character it originally poſſeſſed — a PUBLIC SCHOOL of VIRTUE, and of MANNERS.

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convince the public, that neither the *dictatorial air*, of most of our modern dramatists, nor the *false taste* which gives them a *temporary palm*, are indications of real genius, or a fundamental knowledge of their art. Let me be permitted to say, at the same time, I have a greater object in my view, — a wish to be foremost, in recovering the theatre from such *usurpers*, and restoring it to that respectable character it originally possessed — a PUBLIC SCHOOL of VIRTUE, and of MANNERS.

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ERRATA.

Page 14, line the laſt, for *pronounciation* read *pronunciation.*
Page 61, line 23, for *another* read *an.*
Page 114, line 21, for *the* read *he.*
Page 122, line 24, dele *but.*
Page 168, line 6, for *pantomimer* read *pantomime.*
Page 190, line the laſt, dele *theſe.*

ELEMENTS

OF

DRAMATIC CRITICISM.

CHAPTER I.

A ſketch of the origin of the antient Drama.

AS we ſhall have frequent occaſion to make comparative views, and alluſions to the antient Drama, it will be neceſſary for us to preface this work with a general view of it, in order that thoſe who are not converſant in this branch of antient hiſtory, may be the better enabled to judge of the propriety, or impropriety of our obſervations.

Father Brumoy, and many other authors, have gone into a variety of accounts reſpecting the origin of the Drama, moſt of which

carry the marks of ſuch fable and uncertainty that we cannot follow them with any degree of authority; all authors, however, agree that tragedy in Greece was derived from the hymns of Bacchus which were ſung, in parts, by a chorus; this rural ſacrifice became, in time, a ſolemn feaſt, and aſſumed all the pomp of a religious ceremony; poets were employed by the magiſtrate to compoſe hymns, or ſongs for the occaſion, whilſt the prize, (which as Horace intimates was ſcarce worth contending for, being no more than a goat-ſkin of wine) was given to the happy poet, who acquitted himſelf beſt in the taſk aſſigned him.

This was perhaps the period when Theſpis firſt pointed out the tragic path, who exhibited his rude performances in a cart, and beſmeared the faces of his actors with the lees of wine, probably to diſguiſe their perſons, and give them the appearance of thoſe whom they repreſented. To theſe innovations he introduced a new perſonage, who relieved the chorus, by reciting part of ſome well-known hiſtory, or fable, which gave time for them to reſt: all that the actor repeated, between the ſongs of the chorus, was called an epiſode; conſiſting, often, of different adventures, which had no connection with each other.

other; thus the chorus, or ſong, which was at firſt the only, and afterwards the principal performance, became gradually, and inſenſibly, but an inconſiderable, though, as we ſhall ſee hereafter, a neceſſary and ornamental part of the drama.

From this time, we may imagine, the actor, or reciter was more attended to than the chorus; however his part was executed, it had the charms of novelty to recommend it, and quickly obſcured the luſtre of the chorus, whoſe ſongs were now of a different nature, inſomuch, that the original ſubject of them, *the praiſe of Bacchus*, was, by degrees, either ſlightly mentioned, or forgotten. The prieſts, who, we may ſuppoſe, for a long time preſided over the whole, grew alarmed at this open contempt of the deity, and unanimouſly exclaimed againſt it, as a profanation of thoſe rites which they were bound to protect.

From the days of Theſpis, to thoſe of Æſchylus, all is doubt, conjecture, and obſcurity; 'tis true, we have the names of many intermediate dramatiſts handed down to us, particularly a ſcholar of Theſpis, named Phrynicus, who, it is ſaid, wrote nine tragedies, for one of which he was fined fifty drachmas, becauſe it was too deep and affecting; but what that tragedy was, or thoſe of his

cotemporaries, and immediate ſucceſſors, we have no accounts, (their works being loſt) that can be depended on with any degree of certainty, or preciſion.

Thus much, however, is probable, that tragedy, during the lives of theſe writers, made but a ſlow progreſs, and received very little, or perhaps no improvement; when, at length, the great Æſchylus aroſe, who, from this rude and indigeſted chaos, created, as it were, a new world, in the dramatic ſyſtem; He it was that introduced *dialogue*, that moſt eſſential part of tragedy, which, by the addition of a ſecond perſonage, threw the whole fable into action, and reſtored the chorus to its antient dignity.

Æſchylus did not ſtop here; reſolving that no external ornaments ſhould be wanting to render this his favourite child univerſally amiable, he cloathed her in the moſt ſplendid habit, and beſtowed on her every thing that art could procure to heighten, or improve her charms; as he was himſelf both author, actor, and manager, he took upon him the whole conduct of the drama, and did not neglect the leaſt part of it; he improved the ſcenery and decorations, brought his actors into a regular and well conſtructed theatre, raiſed his heroes on the cothurnus, or buſkin, invented the maſques,

maſques, and introduced ſplendid habits with long trains, which gave an air of majeſty and dignity to the performers.

From this æra then, we are to conſider tragedy as an elegant and noble ſtructure, built according to the rules of art, ſymmetry, and proportion; whoſe every part was in itſelf fair, firm, and compact, and at the ſame time contributed to the beauty, uſefulneſs, and duration of the whole edifice. Sophocles and Euripides carefully ſtudied the plan laid down by Æſchylus, and by their ſuperior genius and judgement, improved it, in a ſhort time, to its higheſt ſtate of perfection, from which it gradually declined to the introduction of the Roman drama.

CHAP. II.

Of the Prologue, Epiſode, Exode, and Chorus.

HAVING thus taken a curſory review of the origin, and eſtabliſhment of the antient drama, we ſhall next ſpeak of its parts, which conſiſted of a beginning, a middle, and an end; or, in the words of Ariſtotle, the prologue, the epiſode, and exode. Horace has further told us, there ſhould be five acts; "*Neve minor, neu ſit "quinto productior actu;*" but it does not from thence follow, that it always was ſo, as the Greek tragedies carry a convincing proof, that no ſuch thing was ever thought of by them; ſeveral critics have indeed diſcovered an office for the chorus, which the poet never aſſigned them, by making thoſe intervals which were ſupplied by the ſongs, *acts*—tho' it is evident, that the buſineſs of the chorus was, on the other hand, to prevent that vacancy in the drama, which the diviſion of acts muſt neceſſarily produce.

The *prologue* of antient tragedy contains all thoſe circumſtances which are neceſſary to be known, for the better underſtanding and comprehenſion of the whole drama; as the place

place of the ſcene, the time when the action commences, the names and characters of the perſons concerned, together with ſuch a view of the plot, as might awaken the curioſity of the ſpectator, without letting him too far into the deſign and conduct of it.

The *epiſode* is all that part of the tragedy, which is between the ſongs, or intermedes of the chorus: this anſwers to our ſecond, third, and fourth acts, and comprehends all the intrigue, or plot to the cataſtrophe, which, in the beſt antient writers, is not made till after the laſt ſong of the chorus; the conduct and diſpoſition of the epiſode, may be conſidered as the ſureſt teſt of the poet's abilities, as it generally determines the merit, and decides the fate of the drama: here all the art of the writer is neceſſary to ſtop the too otherwiſe rapid progreſs of the fable, by the intervention of ſome new circumſtance, that involves the perſons concerned in freſh difficulties, awakens the attention of the ſpectators, and leads them, as it were, inſenſibly, to the moſt natural concluſion, and unravelling of the whole.

The *exode* is all that part of the tragedy, which is recited after the chorus has left off ſinging; it anſwers to our fifth act, and contains the unravelling, or cataſtrophe of the piece; after which, it is remarked by the

critics, any ſong of the chorus would on ly be tedious and unneceſſary, becauſe, what is ſaid when the action is finiſhed, cannot be too ſhort.

The *chorus*, as we have before obſerved, gave the firſt hint to the formation of tragedy, and was, as it were, the corner-ſtone of the whole edifice; as a religious ceremony, it was conſidered by the multitude with a kind of ſuperſtitious veneration, it is not therefore improbable, that the firſt authors of the regular drama, willingly gave way to popular prejudices; and for this, amongſt many other reaſons, incorporated it into tragedy; accordingly we find the chorus of Æſchylus reſuming its original office, reciting the praiſes of the local deities, demigods, and heroes taking the part of diſtreſſed virtue, and abounding throughout in all thoſe moral precepts and religious ſentiments, by which the general writings of the antients are ſo eminently and honourably diſtinguiſhed.

The antients thought it highly improbable, that a great, or intereſting event ſhould be performed without witneſſes; their choruſſes were, therefore, compoſed of ſuch perſons as moſt naturally might be ſuppoſed preſent on the occaſion; perſons, whoſe ſituation might ſo far intereſt them in the events of the fable, as to render their preſence uſeful and neceſſary;

neceſſary; and yet not ſo deeply concerned as to make them incapable of performing that office, to which they were more particularly appointed, the giving proper advice, and making proper reflections on every thing that occurred in the courſe of the drama; for this purpoſe a choriphæus, or leader, ſuperintended and directed; the reſt ſpoke for the whole body in the dialogue, and led the ſongs and dances in the intermede.

The chorus had likewiſe another office, which was to relieve the ſpectator, during the pauſes and intervals of the action, by an ode or ſong adapted to the occaſion, naturally ariſing from the incidents, and connected with the ſubject of the drama; here the author generally gave a looſe to his imagination, diſplayed his poetical abilities, and ſometimes, perhaps too often, wandered from the ſcene of action into the regions of fancy; the audience, notwithſtanding were pleaſed with this ſhort relaxation and agreeable variety; ſoothed by the power of numbers, and the excellency of the compoſition, they readily forgave the writer, and returned, as it were, with double attention to his proſecution of the main ſubject: to this part of the antient chorus, we are indebted for ſome of the nobleſt flights of poetry, as well as the fineſt ſentiments, that adorn the writings of the Greek tragedians.

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The number of perſons compoſing the chorus, was probably at firſt indeterminate, varying according to the circumſtances and plot of the drama; Æſchylus, we are told, brought no leſs than fifty into his *Eumenides*, in the form of furies, whoſe habits, geſture, and whole appearance, was, by the art of the poet, rendered ſo formidable as to frighten the whole audience, and make ſeveral women miſcarry on the ſpot. This accident ſo alarmed the public, that a decree was immediately iſſued, to limit the number to twelve; Sophocles was afterwards permitted to add three more, a limitation, we have reaſon to imagine, became a rule to ſucceeding poets.

The chorus continued on the ſtage during the whole repreſentation of the piece, unleſs when ſome very extraordinary circumſtance required their abſence; this obliged the poet to a continuity of action, as the chorus could not have an excuſe for remaining on the ſpot, when the affair, which called them together, was at an end; it preſerved alſo the unity of time, for, if the poet had comprehended in his play, a week, a month, or a year, how could the ſpectators be made to believe, that the people who were before them, could have paſſed ſo long a time without eating, drinking, or ſleeping? Thus we find,

find, that the chorus preſerved all the unities of action, time, and place, that it prepared the incidents, and inculcated the moral of the piece, relieved, and amuſed the ſpectators, preſided over, and directed the muſic, made a part of the decoration, and, in ſhort, pervaded and animated the whole.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of the Verſe, Recitation, and Muſic.

THE art of poetry was, in one reſpect, conſidered by the antients, the art of making verſes proper to be ſung; they looked upon words, not only as ſigns of particular ideas, but as ſounds alſo, enabled by the aſſiſtance of muſic, to expreſs all the paſſions of the human mind: the ancient audiences were all accuſtomed to this, as one of the firſt parts of their education was the knowledge of muſic, which they cultivated thro' life, with ſuch aſſiduity, that it was reckoned a reproach to be ignorant of it; hence the ſenſe was equally fitted for the ear, as well as the heart. When dreadful or diſagreeable objects were to be repreſented, the words were formed of ſuch harſh and jarring ſyllables, as by grating on the ear, might beſt impreſs the exacteſt repreſentation of them; and, in like manner, when the grand, the beautiful, or the tender, was to be ſet before the imagination of the ſpectator, the language was carefully, and often, too ſtudiouſly, adapted to it.

The Greeks, who were extremely ſolicitous to cultivate and improve their language

to

to the higheſt degree of perfection, took more than ordinary care in the formation of their verſe; the quantity of every ſyllable was carefully aſcertained, different words, different dialects, and different feet were appropriated to different ſpecies of poetry, and none infringed on the rights and privileges of another; but tragedy, as the ſovereign, aſſumed a kind of peculiar title to them all; every ſpecies of verſe was occaſionally introduced to adorn and beautify the drama; the Iambic was generally made uſe of in the body of the piece, as approaching, according to the judgement of Ariſtotle, neareſt to common diſcourſe, and therefore moſt naturally adapted to the dialogue; this rule, however, is not conſtantly and invariably obſerved, but ſometimes departed from with judgement; the metre is frequently changed, not only in the ſongs of the chorus, but in other places, and that generally in the moſt intereſting and impaſſioned parts of the drama, where it may here be obſerved, it is moſt probable, the muſic and inſtruments accompanying the verſe, were changed alſo; a happy circumſtance for the poet, as it muſt have afforded an agreeable relief to the audience, who would naturally be fatigued by the repetition of the ſame ſounds, were they ever ſo harmonious.

It is more than probable, that the theatrical declamation of the antients was compoſed and written in notes, and that the whole play, from beginning to end, (except the commoi, and choruſſes) were a kind of recitative, like our modern operas; we are induced to this way of thinking, from an opinion of P. Meneſtrier, and ſeveral other learned men, that the cuſtom of chaunting in churches was originally taken from the antient ſtage, as the theatres were open at the commencement of the chriſtian æra; and it is not improbable, but that the common people might recite our Saviour's paſſion after the manner of the tragedians; one point, however, we are certain of, that in our nation, as well as in many others, the firſt tragedies exhibited, were on religious ſubjects; and, in ſome places, continue ſo to this day.

The whole of the piece was accompanied with muſic, and the actor, who was the reciter, had little elſe to do, than carefully to obſerve the directions of the poet; the quantity of every word was aſcertained, the time, duration, and rhythmus of every ſyllable fixed by the muſician, ſo that he could not eaſily miſtake, or offend. The actor was not, as on our ſtage, left at liberty to murder fine ſentiment and language by wrong accents, and falſe pronounciation, by hurrying over ſome parts with

with precipitancy, and drawling out others into a tedious monotony; he was obliged to cultivate his voice, as well as his judgement.

Though muſic pervaded the whole of the antient drama, and, according to l'Abbe Du Bos, even aſſiſted the geſticulation, we imagine the principal exertion of it's powers muſt have been reſerved for the ſongs, where both the poetry and muſic admitted of much greater freedom and variety, than in the other parts of the drama: thus we ſee, in the antient theatre, muſic always accompanied her ſiſter ſcience; aſſiſted, animated, and ſupported her, and was in ſhort, in all reſpects, her friend and fellow-labourer.

And here we cannot but remark, what a combination of talents, the office of a dramatic poet, in the time of antient tragedy, required; for, beſides all the other requiſites, it was neceſſary that he ſhould be maſter of every kind of verſe, completely ſkilled in muſic, and able to direct all the evolutions, movements, or (if we ſo chuſe to call them) the dances of the chorus; a height of knowledge that can ſcarce be looked up to by our preſent race of pigmy ſtage writers, whoſe *patched* or *tranſlated* performances have lately aſſumed the name of tragedy, and who owe one part of their ſucceſs more to their *induſtry*, than their

their *parts*, and are indebted for the other to the falſe taſte of the age, joined to the real merit of ſome principal performers.

After all, the uſe of muſic in tragedy, hath been a matter of much doubt and contention with modern critics; M. Dacier thinks it, by no means, eſſential, and greatly condemns Ariſtotle for his approbation of it; it ſeems to be, notwithſtanding, indiſputable, that on the antient ſtage, muſic was a moſt beautiful adjunct to poetry, and contributed, in a great meaſure to the poliſh of the Greek drama; We cannot, perhaps, ſo eaſily reſolve how far it may be reconcileable to modern uſage, though, from ſome experiments on our own theatres, ſuch as in ſacrifices, proceſſions, &c. we have reaſon to think, that when uſed, thus ſparingly, and with judgement, it might be attended with its deſired effect.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Maſks of the Antients.

THOUGH the Romans have pretended to have been the firſt inventors of the maſk, and that it was one Roſcius Gallus, (according to Diomedes) who firſt wore one on their ſtage, to conceal the defects of ſquinting; the better, and more univerſal opinion gives it to Æſchylus, who introduced it into Greece, upon the firſt eſtabliſhment of that drama; this cuſtom has been preſerved in part on ſome modern ſtages, as a great many perſonages of the Italian comedy are ſtill maſked; and it is not a long while ſince (according to L'Abbé du Bos) they were frequently uſed on the French ſtage in the repreſentation of comedies.

The antient players, as well in tragedy as comedy, had ſeveral ſorts of maſks, which they frequently changed; for the people belonging to the ſtage were of opinion, in thoſe times, that a particular phyſiognomy was ſo very eſſential to the character, as to think it neceſſary to give the figure of the maſk proper for the repreſentation, in order to communicate a more complete repreſentation. After

the deſcription, therefore, of each perſonage, ſuch as they uſed to prefix to their theatrical pieces, under the title of *perſons of the drama*, it was cuſtomary for them to give the figure of the maſk, which appeared to them a neceſſary inſtruction.

But, as theſe ſtage ornaments are not ſo eaſily reconcileable to modern cuſtom, we ſhall here give an account of their principal advantages on the antient ſtage. The uſe of maſks prevented people from ſeeing an actor, advanced in years, play the part of a young lover; Hippolytus, Hercules, and Neſtor, appeared always upon the ſtage, with their heads diſtinguiſhable, by being ſuited to their known characters; the vizard, under which the actor appeared, was always agreeable to the part he repreſented; hence there was no ſuch thing to be ſeen, as a player acting the part of a man of honour, with the phyſiognomy of an accompliſhed villain. "When the compoſers of declamation, ſays Quintilian, introduce a piece upon the ſtage, they know how to draw the pathetic even from the very maſks: in tragedies, Niobe appears with a ſorrowful countenance; and Medea announces her character by the fierce air of her phyſiognomy; ſtrength, and valour are painted on Hercules's maſk, whilſt that of Ajax proclaims his tranſport and fury.

In comedies, the maſks of ſlaves, pimps, paraſites, peaſants, ſoldiers, old women, courtezans, and ſhe-ſlaves, have each their particular character: by the maſks, we diſtinguiſh the croſs old fellow, from the good-natured old gentleman; the ſober youth from the debauched rake, and the young damſel from the lady of quality; if the father, who acts the principal character of the comedy, is to be ſometimes pleaſed, and ſometimes vexed, he muſt have one of the brows of his maſk knit, and the other ſmooth, and he has a particular attention to ſhew that ſide of his maſk to his ſpectators, which agrees with his preſent character."

The maſks, likewiſe produced a great probability in thoſe excellent plays, where the intricacy ariſes from the miſtake, by which ſome of the actors take one perſonage for another; the ſpectator, who found himſelf miſtaken, upon attempting to diſtinguiſh between two actors, whoſe maſk was as like as poſſible, might eaſily conceive, that the actors themſelves were deceived; thus he was ſoon impoſed upon by the ſuppoſition on which the incidents of the piece are founded; whereas this ſuppoſition is ſo very improbable with us, that it is with great difficulty we give way to it; in ſeveral of our dramatic pieces, the plots of which are principally founded on

theſe miſtakes, the audience perceive diſtinctly, that the perſonages who occaſion them are really different; how is it poſſible then to conceive, that the actors, who are nearer to them, ſhould be miſtaken in this reſpect, but to the habit we have of humouring all the ſuppoſitions which cuſtom has eſtabliſhed on the ſtage, and which, from the frequency of the act, obliterates all the abſurdity of it?

The maſks, likewiſe, furniſhed the antients with the opportunity of making men act thoſe female perſonages, whoſe declamation required robuſter lungs than women generally have, eſpecially when they were to make themſelves heard in ſuch ſpacious places as the Roman theatres; in fact, ſeveral paſſages of the antients, and amongſt the reſt a recital, which Aulus Gellius gives of the adventure that happened to a comedian, whoſe name was Polus, who acted the part of Electra, inform us, that it was cuſtomary for them to make men act female characters.

In the antient Greek comedy too, which allowed the poet the liberty of characteriſing any living citizen, the actor wore a maſk, which exactly reſembled the perſon to be repreſented in the play; and thus Socrates might have ſeen on the Athenian ſtage, when Ariſtophanes perſonated him in his comedy of "the Clouds,

Clouds," his ſecond-ſelf; without examining here into the unbridled licence of this uſage, there is no doubt it's utility, in point of perſonification, was very great, as the poet had nothing to do, but to draw ſome leading traits of the mind; the painter made out the reſt.

But, notwithſtanding what has been advanced in favour of the antient maſks, who is it that can be ſo attached to them, as not to prefer the natural diſplay of the countenance to that imagined by art? The antient players frequent change of their maſks, and the turning, occaſionally, their different profiles to the audience, no doubt, gave them all that variety they were capable of; but who that has ſeen a Garrick thunder, and lighten, freeze, and diſſolve, by the irreſiſtible accompanyment of his features, but muſt turn with contempt from ſo feeble, ſo inadequate a ſubſtitute?

We are led to think, therefore, that the antients themſelves, (who, to do them juſtice, ſcarce ever departed from nature, but on the beſt grounds) would have made their performers lay aſide their maſks, were it not for this reaſon; that, as their theatres were prodigious large, and without a roof, or ſolid covering, the maſk was of uſe to the player,

inaſmuch as it was ſo conſtructed to aid his voice, and make himſelf heard by all the ſpectators; beſide, as it was impoſſible the nicer alterations of the face, ſhould be perceived by the audience, a great number of whom were upwards of twelve fathom from the ſtage, the features of the maſk were made to anſwer ſo diſtant a perſpective.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

On the Diviſion of theatrical Declamation between two Actors, one of whom pronounced, whilſt the other geſticulated.

THE declamation of dramatic pieces, was frequently divided between two actors; one of whom was obliged to pronounce, while the other performed the geſticulation. How to reconcile this ſeemingly ſtrange mode to the modern ſtage is, perhaps, not altogether practicable; however, as there are many reaſons which, in a great meaſure, tend to illuſtrate this practice, we ſhall lay them before our readers, premiſing with the adventure which firſt eſtabliſhed it as a cuſtom.

" Livius Andronicus *, a celebrated poet, who flouriſhed about the year 514 of Rome, and near fourſcore years after the theatres had been opened in that city, uſed to act in ſome of his pieces; it was then a cuſtomary thing for dramatic poets to appear themſelves on the ſtage, in order to recite ſome part of their works; the people who aſſumed the liberty, *which they ſtill preſerve in France and Italy*,

* Tit. Liv. hiſ. lib. 7.

of deſiring thoſe paſſages to be repeated which pleaſed them moſt, by crying out ſo often the latin word *bis*, (which anſwers to the French word *encore* we make uſe of) made poor Andronicus recite ſo long, that at laſt he grew quite hoarſe; finding himſelf, therefore, incapable of declaiming any longer, he made the people conſent to his having a ſlave to recite the verſes, whom he placed before the muſician, whilſt he made the ſame geſticulation, as if he himſelf had been reciting; it was then obſerved, that from this relief, his action grew more lively and animated, becauſe he exerted his whole ſtrength in geſticulating, whilſt another had the care and trouble of pronouncing."

"Hence the practice aroſe, continues Livy, of dividing the declamation between two actors, and to recite, as it were, to the geſture and action of the comedian; and this cuſtom has ſo far prevailed, that they pronounce nothing at preſent but the verſes of the dialogue."

The art of geſture, ſuitable to the theatrical declamation, was ſubdivided into three different methods: the firſt taught the *Emmelia*, proper for tragic declamation; the ſecond the *Cordax*, fitted to the declamation of comedies; the third ſhewed the *Sicinnis*, a geſture proper for the recitation of thoſe dramatic

matic pieces, which the antients called ſatires; the perſonages who recited in theſe three kinds of poems, uſed ſeveral geſticulations particularly adapted to each.

How was it poſſible (ſome will ſay) for the antients to reduce thoſe methods to writing, and to find out notes, and characters which ſhould expreſs all the attitudes and movements of the body? really we cannot tell; but Feuillee's Chorography (which we quote on the credit of L'Abbé Du Bos) ſhews the thing was poſſible; there is no more difficulty in learning to make geſtures by notes, than in knowing, by notes, how to make ſteps and figures; now that the latter is poſſible, is ſaid to be demonſtrated by Feuillee's book.

Though we have not reduced the uſe of geſtures into an art, and for want of being ſufficiently acquainted with this ſubject, have not conſequently divided the objects as much as the antients; yet it is viſible, that tragedy, and comedy, even with us, have their own peculiar geſtures; the action, attitude, and countenance of our actors, who recite in tragedy, are not the ſame as when they act in comedy; directed merely by inſtinct, they render us, in ſome reſpect, ſenſible of the principles on which the antients founded the diviſion of theatrical geſture, and reduced it into three different methods,

" Nature,

" Nature, as Cicero obſerves, having given each paſſion and ſentiment its particular expreſſion on the countenance, as well as its proper tone and geſture."

We find ſeveral things, in a chapter of Quintilian's inſtitutes, where he ſpeaks more copiouſly than elſewhere, of the geſture ſuitable to an orator, which plainly indicate, that the comedians had particular ſchools in his time, where they inſtructed in theatrical geſture; here he diſſuades his pupil, ſometimes from following what the comedians taught, in relation to ſome particular part of their action; and, at other times, he cites them as good maſters; " Thoſe who teach the ſcenic art (ſays he, in another part of the ſame chapter *) find, that the geſture made only with the head, is a bad geſture."

It even appears, that theſe profeſſors had, what we call terms of art; for Quintilian, ſpeaking of the countenance, which an orator ſhould ſhew for ſome time, before he has commenced his diſcourſe, (when the eyes of a whole audience are fixed upon him) ſays, " that the comedians gave, to this ſtudied ſilence, the appellation of *pauſes*."

But we ſhall endeavour to explain here, more intelligibly, than we have hitherto done, how the action of the player, who geſticulated,

* Quint. Inſt. lib. iv. cap. 3.

lated, could accompany the pronunciation of the perſon that recited: the antient theatrical muſic was divided into two parts, the *hypocritical* and *metrical*; the former ſhewed the art of following the meaſure in *geſticulation*, as the latter did in *recital*; ſo that the actor who recited, and the perſon that geſticulated, were obliged to follow the ſame meaſure and time.

We have ſeen in Quintilian *, that they endeavoured to eſtabliſh a proportion between the geſture and words of the orator, ſo that his action ſhould be neither too quick, nor broken; very likely this idea aroſe from hence, that the actor, who recited on the ſtage, ought to pronounce only a certain number of words, whilſt the other made a particular geſture; be this as it will, 'tis certain they both followed the ſame meaſure beaten by the ſame perſon, who had before him the verſes to be recited, and whoſe ſyllables pointed out the time; above theſe verſes they noted the geſtures which the players were to make, meaſure by meaſure.

In what manner ſoever this was done, we know that the actors agreed perfectly well in their different parts. Seneca ſays, "'tis ſurpriſing to ſee the geſture of eminent comedians on the ſtage, overtake, and even keep pace

* Cap. ii. part 3.

pace with ſpeech, notwithſtanding the velocity of the tongue." 'Tis plain, that Seneca's meaning does not relate here to a perſon, who executes both at the ſame time, for there is nothing leſs ſurpriſing, than to ſee his geſture move as quick as his pronunciation: the thing is very natural, and there can be no room for admiration, *but* when one actor recites, whilſt another geſticulates: we find likewiſe, by a paſſage in Cicero, that a comedian, who dropped a geſture out of time, was hiſſed as much as one who was miſtaken in pronouncing a verſe; Lucian obſerves alſo, that a geſture, not in its proper meaſure, was eſteemed a capital fault in an actor, which occaſioned the proverb among the Greeks, "*To commit a ſoleciſm with the hand.*"

There is no manner of doubt then, but the antient comedians excelled in this part of the declamation; they had very great natural diſpoſitions for it, if we may form a judgement of them, by what we obſerve even in their countrymen, our co-temporaries; they applied themſelves with great care and aſſiduity to their profeſſion, and that they arrived to a wonderful pitch of excellence in it, we ſhall add to the authorities we have already given, what a grave father * of the primitive church ſays of it, "That this geſticulation was as be-

* Tertullian.

bewitching as the diſcourſe of the ſerpent, who ſeduced the firſt Woman."

Did we prefer curioſity to utility, we could be much more diffuſive upon the ſubject of the antient drama, by entering into minute details of the dreſſes, dances, conſtruction of the theatres, &c. but, as our deſign is no more than to afford our readers a retroſpective and general view, when we draw compariſons between the antient and modern ſtage, we have confined ourſelves to *eſſentials*; referring thoſe who would wiſh to get beyond this line to the elaborate, yet ingenious father Brumoy on the Greek theatre, who has, perhaps, with more learning and aſſiduity than the ſubject was worth, inveſtigated every, the minuteſt article which antiquity has left us on this point.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

A Definition of Tragedy.

"TRAGEDY is the imitation of an action, which, by means of *terror* and *compaſſion*, refines and purifies in us all ſorts of paſſion." This is Ariſtotle's account of it; and this is what the ableſt critics, both antient and modern, have held to be the pureſt and moſt genuine illuſtration of it: there are other kinds of tragedy, no doubt, where the good are rewarded, and the bad puniſhed, which, however admiſſible under this head, are incapable of producing ſuch good effects as the former; our pity is engaged for the perſons repreſented, and our terror is upon our own account; hence it being the province of *perfect tragedy*, to excite both *pity* and *terror*, an innocent perſon falling into adverſity, ought never to be the ſubject of it; 'tis true, ſuch a one may excite *pity* and *terror*, but the former in an inferior degree, and the latter in no degree for moral inſtruction; the hiſtory of a wicked perſon, likewiſe in a change from miſery to happineſs, ought not to be repreſented, which excites neither terror or compaſſion,

paſſion, nor is agreeable in any reſpect; the misfortunes of a wicked perſon come under the ſame excluſion, as, however ſuch a repreſentation may be partly agreeable upon a principle of juſtice, it will not move our pity, nor any degree of terror, except in thoſe of the ſame vicious diſpoſition with the perſon repreſented; the only character, then, *moſt* fitted for a tragical ſubject, lies in the middle, neither eminently good, nor eminently bad, where the misfortunes are not the effect of deliberate vice, but of ſome involuntary fault.

But let us ſee how tragedy, thus defined, is capable of exciting terror and pity, in order to refine and purify in us all ſorts of paſſion; it excites *terror* and *compaſſion* in us, by ſetting before our eyes the calamities which thoſe, who are like ourſelves, have fallen into by involuntary faults, and it refines them, by rendering thoſe very misfortunes familiar to us, becauſe it teaches us, not to be too much concerned when they really happen. Ariſtotle is not the only critic who has had this idea of tragedy, (though his opinion, from the greatneſs of his character, and the general ſubſcription to it for above two thouſand years paſt, ſhould make it deciſive.) The good emperor, Marcus Aurelius *, paſſed the ſame

* Chap. vi. ninth book of his Reflections.

judgement on it in the following words: "Tragedies, ſays he, were firſt introduced, to put men in mind of thoſe accidents which happen in their lives; to inform them they muſt neceſſarily come, and teach them, that thoſe things they ſee with ſo much delight on the ſtage, ſhould not appear inſupportable in the grand theatre of the world."

The advantage tragedy brings to mankind, is by no means inconſiderable; it prepares us to bear the moſt unlucky accidents courageouſly, and diſpoſes the moſt miſerable to think themſelves happy, when they compare their own misfortunes with thoſe which tragedy has repreſented to them; in whatever condition a man may be, yet, when he ſhall ſee an *Oedipus*, or a *Lear*, he can but think his own afflictions light in compariſon with theirs: but it ſtops not here; it refines, at the ſame time, all thoſe other paſſions which can precipitate us into the ſame troubles; for, in exhibiting the crimes which have drawn thoſe *miſerables* into what they ſuffer, it teaches us to ſtand on our own guard, and powerfully induces us to moderate, and refine in ourſelves what was the only cauſe of their loſs; thus tragedy becomes an uſeful medicine to the mind, by thoroughly purging the paſſions, at the ſame time that we receive a pleaſure in the operation.

Having

Having given this brief illuſtration of tragedy, we ſhall now proceed to the four principal parts of which it is compoſed, and which are as follow:

FABLE,
MANNERS,
SENTIMENTS,
DICTION.

Ariſtotle, indeed, has added two more, *decoration* and *muſic*; but as theſe (though eſſentially neceſſary on the Greek ſtage) are conſidered at preſent little better than ornamental appendages, we ſhall make no apology for omitting them here.

CHAP. VII.

Of Fable.

FABLE, which is juſtly called the *ſoul* of a dramatic poem, is thus defined: "A diſcourſe, invented with art, to form the manners by inſtruction, diſguiſed under the allegory of an action." Ariſtotle has divided the fable into two parts, *ſimple* and *compound*. The ſimple fable is that in which there is neither change of condition, nor remembrance, and the unravelling of which is only a ſingle paſſage of agitation, and trouble, repoſe, and tranquility; or, according to Brumoy, where the hero of the piece, already unfortunate, arrives inſenſibly at the completion of wretchedneſs, like Phædra and Hippolitus; or where he paſſes from happineſs to miſery, like Oedipus; or, where he may riſe from the depth of calamity, to a happy fortune like Nicomedes.

Compound-fable, is that which hath a change from bad fortune to good, or from good to bad; that is, of two ſorts of perſonages, the one criminal, the other virtuous; they

they each may reverſe the balance; the reward due to virtue may, in the end, be given to vice, that of vice to virtue; or the latter may be puniſhed, and the former recompenſed.

The contrivance of each fable, muſt have likewiſe two parts, the *intrigue* and *diſcovery*; the intrigue ſhould but dawn in the firſt act, and unfold itſelf progreſſively, (ſubject to occaſional involutions) till the full diſcovery is made in the fifth; it is true, a number of theatrical pieces have their cataſtrophe in the latter end of the fourth act; but the former is the moſt favourable ſituation for a poet, not only as it is more agreeable to antient rules, but as it intereſts the minds of the audience, after the main ſubject is known, inferior matters are little attended to.

In reſpect to which of the two kind of fables pleaſes moſt, Ariſtotle prefers the *ſimple* as the moſt perfect; the *compound*, however, has its admirers; but then great care muſt be taken not to be betrayed into perplexity. Every thing ſhould proceed from the very conſtitution of the ſubject, in ſuch a manner, that what precedes, ſhould produce; therefore, in all double plots, one of them muſt be of the nature of an epiſode;

for it would diſtract the ſpectator, inſtead of entertaining him, if he were forced to attend, at the ſame time, to two capital plots equally intereſting; upon this account, the tragedy of Oroonoko (before it received its late judicious alterations) was highly cenſurable; the ſcenes which brought the family of the *Lackits* into action, being ludicrous and farcical, deſtroyed the tone and effect of the principal plot, which is pathetic and affecting: it follows then, whenever a double plot is introduced, it ſhould be not only ſubordinate to the principal, but ſo connected and interwoven, as to reſemble ſhades of colours harmoniouſly mixed and blended.

It is neceſſary for a fable likewiſe, to have a juſt extent, that is, a *beginning*, a *middle*, and an *end*; and however the manner may be altered, theſe three conditions muſt be inviolably preſerved; for both tragedy and epopeæia mutually require actions which have theſe properties; and here we muſt remark, they differ from ordinary fables, (ſuch as thoſe of Æſop) that are often with a beginning and middle, yet without an end; but as theſe terms may not be thought ſufficiently explicit, we will explain them more exactly: the cauſe and deſign of undertaking an action, are the *beginning*; the effects of theſe cauſes, and the difficulties we find in the

the execution of that deſign, are the *middle*; the unravelling, and reſolving thoſe difficulties, are the *end*; but to render this ſtill plainer, by an example, the ſubject of the tragedy of Macbeth is that prince's ambition, which was deſtructive to himſelf; now, the beginning of that action, is the reſolution he has taken, from the prophecy of the weird ſiſters, that he *ſhould* be king; the *middle* is all the murders he waded through to obtain it; and the *end* is, when after perpetrating theſe horrid actions, he is, himſelf, juſtly killed as an atonement for them.

In reſpect to the choice of a ſubject, 'tis a matter of indifference, whether it be taken from any well known point of hiſtory, or totally invented, provided, in the laſt caſe, it be probable and important; but in chuſing a ſubject that makes a figure in hiſtory, greater precaution is neceſſary, than where the whole is a fiction; in the latter caſe, there is full ſcope for invention; the author is under no reſtraint, other than that the characters and incidents be juſt copies of nature; but where the ſtory is founded on truth, no material circumſtance muſt be added, but ſuch as connects naturally with what is known to be true; hiſtory may be ſupplied, but ought not to be contradicted: a poet ſhould, therefore, not make Alexander in love with

Cleopatra, nor Cæſar the murderer of Brutus; he ſhould likewiſe ſhew the ſame reſpect to received and eſtabliſhed fables, as he does to hiſtory; the accounts we have received of theſe gods and heroes, have, for many ages, acquired a right of paſſing for truth; nor are we entitled to contradict ſuch relations; he ſhould not likewiſe, without great neceſſity, alter the manners and cuſtoms of theſe countries where he places his ſcenes; further, the ſubject ſo choſen, ſhould be diſtant in time, or, at leaſt, in place; the familiarity of recent perſons and events ought to be avoided, as modern manners would make but a poor figure in tragedy.

We would not, however, be underſtood to fall into that vulgar track of under-rating every thing that is modern; the roughneſs, plainneſs, and impetuoſity of antient manners, ſhew better in tragedy, without being, perhaps, better fitted for ſociety; but without regard to this circumſtance, it is the familiarity of modern manners, as well as modern heroes, that unqualify them for a lofty ſubject; the dignity of both will be better underſtood in future ages, when they are no longer familiar; men are, in this reſpect, like pictures, they claim a greater ſhare of our admiration on being viewed at a certain diſtance; when we come up too cloſe to the one, we

loſe

loſe all the benefit of light and ſhade; and on a nearer view of the other, we diſcover ſuch vanities, little jealouſies, and inequalities of mind, as are far from inſpiring us with that love and veneration, which probably the ſame characters may afford ſeveral centuries back; therefore we readily join iſſue with that author, who ſays, "that the greateſt enemies of the glory of heroes, are their *valet de chambres*; beſides, as tragedy is fond of adorning her victims with crowns and ſceptres, and the ſovereign houſes in our times, are ſo connected, one with another, by intermarriages, it would be almoſt impoſſible to exhibit, at preſent, upon any ſtage, a prince that had reigned within a hundred years in any neighbouring kingdom, in whom the ſovereign of the country, where the piece was to be acted, would not find himſelf intereſted as a relation; this circumſtance alone carries with it ſuch obvious inconveniences, as makes any further objections unneceſſary.

We are not ignorant, however, that both the practice of our juſtly admired Shakeſpeare, and ſeveral of the Greek poets, meet this laſt point in ſome oppoſition, but the divine fancy, and immortal ſentiments of the former, in ſome reſpect, covered this ſacrifice of truth, which he ſometimes made to his

royal patroneſs * ; whilſt the latter had been ſo educated in the republican ſpirit of Athens, as to juſtify to the public their endeavours to make monarchy odious by every method in their power; hence the Greek poets have ſometimes disfigured the true character of ſeveral of their living ſovereigns; hence they have ſo frequently introduced Oreſtes upon the ſtage, as a moſt unhappy perſon, and purſued by the furies, tho' hiſtorians mention this prince to have lived to a great age, and to have had a long and proſperous reign over his people †.

After a proper ſubject is choſen, the dividing it into parts requires ſome art; the Greeks, as we have already obſerved, knew of no other diviſion than that of a *beginning*, a *middle*, and an *end*; however, as Horace has given the law for five acts, and the moderns have all followed him, every author ſhould govern himſelf by an opinion, ſo univerſally ſubſcribed to, taking care, to let the old Greek law (the beginning, middle, and end) be, at the ſame time, conſpicuous in his work; for without this, (as we have before obſerved) neither tragedy nor Epopæia can poſſibly exiſt.

In the diviſion of the acts, the concluſion of each ſhould not be looked on as arbitrary, or

* Queen Elizabeth. † Paterculus hiſt. l. 1.

or intended for ſo ſlight a purpoſe, as to make the parts of equal length; the ſuppoſed pauſe, at the end of every book, and the real pauſe at the end of every act, ought always to coincide with ſome pauſe in the action; in this reſpect, a dramatic poem ought to reſemble a period in language, divided into members, that are diſtinguiſhed from each other by proper points; or a piece of muſic, having a full cloſe at the end, preceded by imperfect cloſes that contribute to the melody.

Every act ought, therefore, to terminate with ſome incident that makes a pauſe in the action, for otherwiſe there can be no pretence for interrupting the repreſentation; it would be abſurd to break off in the very heat of action, againſt which every one would exclaim; the abſurdity ſtill remains, though the action relents, if it be not actually ſuſpended for ſome time; this rule is alſo applicable to an epic poem, though there a deviation from the rule is leſs remarkable, becauſe it is in the reader's power to hide the abſurdity, by proceeding inſtantly to another book.

We have already ſaid, on the opening of this chapter, what kind of character, in reſpect to morals, ſhould be choſen as the hero of tragedy; we are now to ſpeak of his quality; and here Ariſtotle gives the rule: "he

muſt be choſen from amongſt thoſe who are of eminent quality and great reputation." 'Tis true, there happen extraordinary and tragical adventures enough amongſt people of low and middling conditions, which might take place in tragedy; but we believe ſuch would never ſucceed ſo well, not by reaſon of the action, for that would have all the neceſſary and requiſite qualifications, but on account of the degree of the perſons, whoſe change of miſery, would not give ſuch lively impreſſions of either *terror* or *compaſſion* as the other; beſide, the greatneſs of eminent men render the action great, and their reputation makes it credible; a foot ſoldier may ſhew more courage and prudence in the day of battle than his general, yet the victory will be aſcribed to the latter, on account of the ſuperiority of his ſtation, and the probability of the cauſe.

It has been a queſtion of ſome agitation amongſt the critics, "Whether it be proper to make the hero of a tragedy a *lover?*" The rigid admirers of the antients preclude it, on the principle of admitting no ſuch *infirmity* in the character of a great man, not conſidering, that to keep up the prevailing idea in a warlike people, it was then, perhaps, more neceſſary, than for us to baniſh a paſſion which tended, even in the ſmalleſt

ſmalleſt inſtance, to obtrude upon *military glory*; but without deciding poſitively on either ſide, of which ſo much has, or may be ſaid, we ſhall offer a few reaſons in defence of thoſe moderns who admit it in their pieces.

The picture of a paſſion which we have never felt, or of a ſituation wherein we have never been, can never move us, in ſo lively a manner, as the deſcriptions of ſuch paſſions and ſituations as either are, or have been formerly our own caſe; in the firſt place, the mind is but ſlightly touched with the picture of a paſſion, whoſe ſymptoms it is a ſtranger to; it is afraid even of being the dupe of an unfaithful imitation; now, the mind has but an imperfect knowledge of paſſions which the heart never felt; all the information we can receive of others, being inſufficient to give us a juſt and preciſe idea of the agitations of a heart over which they tyrannize. Secondly, our hearts muſt generally have very little inclination to ſuch paſſions as we have been inſenſible of in our youth; the heart attains to its full ſtrength much earlier than the mind; and it is almoſt impoſſible, we think, for a young man, not to have felt the motions all of thoſe paſſions which he is ſubject to by the laws of his conſtitution.

How

How is it poſſible for a man, who has no taſte for military glory, and who looks upon what is commonly called a great conqueror, only as a madman, and a burden to mankind? How is it poſſible for him to be deeply affected with the reſtleſs ambition and impetuoſity of Achilles, when he imagines a conſpiracy formed to prevent him from going to acquire immortality by the taking of Troy?

A man likewiſe, who is inſenſible of the allurements of gaming, is not very deeply moved with the diſtreſs of a perſon who has loſt conſiderable ſums of money at play, (other than that pity he has for his contracting ſo dangerous a habit) unleſs he happens to be related to him by ſome of thoſe particular intereſts, which oblige us to ſympathize with our afflicted friends; 'tis amongſt thoſe who are afflicted with the like misfortunes as ourſelves, that we are led by inſtinct to aſſociate with, ſuch generally make themſelves partners of our pains, and conſole us with their ſympathy: Dido, under this influence, immediately conceives a paſſion for Æneas, obliged to fly his native country, becauſe ſhe herſelf was under the ſame predicament, which ſhe expreſſes in the following line:

Non ignara mali miſeris ſuccurrere diſco.

VIRGIL Æn. 1.

If

If poets, therefore, cannot be blamed in chuſing for the ſubject of their imitations, the effects of theſe particular paſſions of which men are ſuſceptible, how much leſs ſo for imitating the effects of *love*, which is confeſſedly the moſt general of all; there being ſcarce any one but who has had the misfortune (if we can call a paſſion, ſo congenial to our natures, by ſo harſh a name) of feeling the effects of it in ſome part, or other of his life.

We will therefore ſubmit theſe reaſonings to the candid critic, and aſk him, whether the poets ſhould be cenſured, for giving ſo univerſal a paſſion a place in the intrigues of their pieces, which, probably, was baniſhed the antient ſtage, only *for reaſons of ſtate?* 'Tis true, a degree of *moderation* is highly neceſſary to be obſerved in the uſe of it; as we ſee, for want of this, ſeveral modern dramatiſts finding it eaſier to imitate good poets in their defects, than in their perfections, have puſhed their complaiſance too far for the taſte of their own times, or, to expreſs it better, they have even encouraged this taſte themſelves, by a ſervile condeſcenſion, 'till by improving upon one another's errors, they have converted the dignity of the *ſtage* into little better than the fooleries and intrigues of a *drawing-room*.

We

We ſhall cloſe our remarks on *fable*, with obſerving after Ariſtotle, " that thoſe who undertake to make a tragedy, will find it much eaſier to ſucceed in the ſtyle and manner, than to form the ſubject rightly; and the reaſon he gives, to ſhew the advantage the ſubject has over all the other parts of tragedy, is drawn from the difficulty which is always found in diſpoſing it in preference to the other parts; for, 'tis a truth, confirmed by the experience of all ages, that in all arts whatever, that which is the principal is moſt difficult, and arrives lateſt to its perfection.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Of Manners.

ARISTOTLE defines the manners of dramatic poetry thus: "The manners, ſays he, are what diſcover the inclination of him who ſpeaks, and whereby we know on what he will determine, before one ſees that he is carried that way, or actually rejects it." We ſhall illuſtrate this definition, which is ſupported by Boſſu, and ſome of the ableſt of the moderns, by the following inſtance:

In the firſt act of Othello, Deſdemona is deſcribed by him, in his ſpeech before the ſenate, beſide many other amiable qualities, as attached to him, on ſuch principles of mental affection, that even, in ſpite of his being of a different colour, and of unequal years, nothing can alter; a little after, a very difficult choice is propoſed to her, whether ſhe will follow her firſt inclination, and go with her huſband, or take the advantage of her father's tenderneſs, by diſclaiming ſo imprudent, and, in ſome reſpect, ſo unnatural a match? on the one ſide gratitude, filial affection, and parental

rental authority, plead to make her reſolve on the latter; on the other, conjugal duty, tho' attended with the loſs of fortune, rank, and parental love, is the only attachment; yet before we ſee what reſolution ſhe will take, the deſcription which Othello has given of her, and the manner of his wooing her, lead us to decide how her inclinations are, and to what ſhe will determine: theſe then are the *dramatic manners*, which are, in this reſpect, good and uniform; if ſhe ſtaid with her father, the manners had been bad, becauſe we ſhould foreſee a choice and reſolution quite contrary to that which ſhe ought to take; but if ſhe had taken no reſolution, one way or other, but left the ſenate to decide for her, then there would be no manners at all.

Therefore, as in philoſophy, the manners are good, when they make that man ſo, in whom they are; and they are bad, when they incline him to vice and evil actions; ſo likewiſe in tragedy, the manners are good, when one may diſcover the virtue, or vice, the good, or bad inclinations of thoſe who ſpeak, or act; but bad when a good man appears vicious, or a wicked man ſeems to have good inclinations; hence the manners of Tameſlane and Richard IIId. conſidered *poetically*, are both equally *good*, becauſe they equally demonſtrate the virtuous

virtuous king on the one ſide, and the arbitrary tyrant on the other, which are the characters the poets beſtowed on them, and under which they are uniformly repreſented.

Manners ſhould have likewiſe four qualities: firſt, they ſhould be *good*; ſecond, *ſuitable*; third, *likely* and *agreeable*; and fourth, *even*. The *goodneſs* which belongs to poetical manners, being to make them appear ſuch as they are, it is neceſſary to obſerve, what are the things which diſcover to us the inclinations of the perſonages: and firſt, the ſpeeches and actions; "there are manners in a poem, (ſays Ariſtotle) if, as we ſaid, the ſpeeches and actions diſcover to us any inclination;" ſo that theſe two things are wholly owing to the poet, who makes his perſonages ſpeak and act as he pleaſes, and they are the foundation of all the reſt; when the manners are well expreſſed after this way, they are denoted purely and ſimply by the term *good*, and this *goodneſs* makes their firſt and principal qualification. Ariſtotle places it in the front of all the reſt, that it may be the more exactly obſerved; and Horace gives the ſame leſſon with his uſual accuracy and knowledge.

"*Notandi ſunt tibi mores.*"

The ſecond thing is the knowledge, which a genius, ſtudy, and experience give us of the *inclinations*, that are proper to each perſon, according to the complexion, the dignity, and all the other cauſes, whether natural, or acquired, internal, or external. As ſoon as the poet has given the dignity of a king to one of his characters, without hearing him ſpeak, or ſeeing him act, we know that he ought to be grave, majeſtical, jealous of his authority, and the like; the inclinations ſhould be *ſuitable* to that which the poet has propoſed; and this *ſuitableneſs* forms the ſecond quality in manners.

The third, is the knowledge which we deduce from the fable, or the hiſtory; this ſort of diſcovery is comprehended under the name of *common opinion*, or *fame*; ſo that when a poet has named Alexander, we know, that the inclination of this perſonage is all for greatneſs and glory, and that his ambition is larger than the extent of the whole earth; if he introduces Richard, or Macbeth, we likewiſe know they are, beſides being ambitious, cruel, and vindictive.

But it ſometimes happens that manners may be made *like*, and not *agreeable*, and *agreeable*, yet not *like*; for inſtance, if a poet ſhould repreſent an emperor, whom hiſtory has deſcribed as *ſordid* and *covetous*, to give him manners that were *like*, would

would, by no means, be *agreeable*, becauſe nothing can be more indecent and unworthy ſo dignified a perſonage; on the contrary, if he ſhould make him magnificent and liberal, he would indeed give him *manners*, which would be *agreeable*, but then they would not be *like*, ſince they would be contrary to the opinion which was commonly received of him. What muſt be done then, that the poet offend neither againſt the *agreeableneſs*, nor the *likeneſs* in the character of this emperor? why he muſt diſſemble his avarice, (ſays M. Dacier, in his notes upon Ariſtotle) without changing it into liberality; 'tis thus Mr. Corneille has uſed it in his Heraclius, in the character of the emperor Maurice, by ſuppreſſing this evil inclination in him, which was not *agreeable*, and yet not giving him the contrary qualities, which would be *unlike*: thus the manners of thoſe heroes in tragedy ſhould be like thoſe which *fame* has reported of them, under this limitation; and this reſemblance makes the third qualification of manners.

The fourth and laſt quality in manners is, that they be *even*, that is, conſiſtent throughout the whole character.

——— *ſervetur ad imum*
Qualis ab incæpto proceſſerit, et ſibi conſtet.
HOR.

not, however, that the perſon is always to betray the ſame ſentiments, or one and the ſame paſſion, this would be as abſurd as tedious; but that he ſhould never ſpeak, or act repugnant to his fundamental character; an old, or a young man, for inſtance; a king, or a ſervant, may, nay ought, as occaſion ſerves, to ſhew the common paſſions of joy, or ſorrow; but for an old man to be introduced in the firſt act, and to appear a young one in the ſecond, is inverting nature. Again, the weak may ſometimes break out into a ſally of warmth, and the breaſt of the paſſionate may ſometimes be calm; a change which, often, introduces into the drama a very affecting variety; but if the natural diſpoſition of the former was to be repreſented as boiſterous, and that of the latter mild and ſoft, they would both act out of character, and contradict the perſons they would repreſent.

But to illuſtrate this further, by a dramatic example in the tragedy of *Venice Preſerv'd*; in the beginning of the play, Jaffier is repreſented as gentle, good-natured, and, above all, living but in the affections of his wife; yet towards the cloſe, we find the very ſame character engaged in a conſpiracy and murder; a perſon may therefore fancy, according to theſe different ſtates, he may likewiſe make the characters of his heroes different,

rent, and that the manners of each part would be good in particular; but though Jaffier ſeems to be thus a different character, yet this change is no more than what is very reconcileable from the beginning; if we conſider his diſtreſſed fortune, his reſentment to his father-in-law (againſt whom, as one of the ſenators, he conſpires,) and his inviolable affection to Belvidera; to contribute to whoſe conveniences, he engages in this very conſpiracy.

Theſe then are the four qualifications of manners, which are become ſtandard from a coincidence of the moſt reſpectable authorities, both antient and modern.

CHAP. IX.

Of Sentiments.

EVERY thought prompted by paſſion, is termed a *ſentiment*; or, in the words of Ariſtotle, "Sentiments are what make the matter of a diſcourſe, and conſiſt in proving, refuting, and exciting the paſſions, as pity, anger, fear, &c. &c." Hence the following rule, concerning dramatic compoſitions, that a paſſion be adjuſted to the character, and ſentiments to the paſſion; if nature be not faithfully copied in each of theſe, a defect in execution is perceived; there may appear ſome reſemblance, but the picture, upon the whole, will be inſipid, thro' want of grace and delicacy; therefore as a painter, in order to repreſent the various attitudes of the body, ought to be intimately acquainted with muſcular motion, ſo no leſs intimately acquainted with emotions, and characters ought a poet be, in order to repreſent the various attitudes of the mind.

To ſpeak in the language of muſic, each paſſion hath a certain tone to which every ſentiment proceeding from it, ought to be tuned

tuned with the greateſt accuracy: this is no eaſy work, eſpecially when ſuch harmony ought to be ſupported during the courſe of a long theatrical repreſentation; in order then to reach ſuch delicacy of execution, it is neceſſary that a writer aſſume the preciſe character and paſſion of the perſonage repreſented, which requires no inconſiderable effort of genius; but if a lively picture, even of a ſingle emotion, requires this effort, how much greater the effort to compoſe a paſſionate dialogue with as many different tones of paſſion as there are ſpeakers? With what ductility of feeling muſt that writer be endued, who approaches perfection in ſuch a work, when it is neceſſary to aſſume different, and even oppoſite characters and paſſions in the quickeſt ſucceſſion?

But how hard dialogue writing is, would be evident, even without any reaſoning, from the miſerable compoſitions of that kind found without number in all languages. The truth is, ſuch execution is too delicate for an ordinary genius; and for that reaſon the bulk of writers, inſtead of expreſſing a paſſion as one does who feels it, content themſelves with deſcribing it, in the language of a ſpectator; to awake paſſion by an internal effort, merely without any external cauſe, requires great ſenſibility; and yet this operation is ne-

ceſſary, not leſs to the writer, than to the actor; becauſe none but thoſe, who actually feel a paſſion can repreſent it to the life; the writer's part is the more complicated; he muſt add compoſition to paſſion, and muſt, in the quickeſt ſucceſſion, adopt every different character.

On the contrary, an humble flight of imagination may ſerve to convert a writer into a ſpectator, ſo as to deſcribe, in ſome obſcure manner, an action as paſſing in his ſight and hearing; in that ſituation, being naturally led to write like a ſpectator, he entertains his readers with his own reflections, with cool deſcriptions, and florid declamation, inſtead of making them eye-witneſſes, as it were, to a real event, and to every movement of genuine paſſion; thus the bulk of modern plays appear all to be caſt in the ſame mould, inſipid reaſoning, tame deſcriptions, and perſonages without the leaſt idea either of character, or paſſion.

As we find, that in the diſcuſſion of this ſubject, it would be almoſt endleſs, to trace even the ordinary paſſions through all their minute differences, we ſhall, for the ſake of adding example to precept, ſelect from the moſt celebrated of our dramatic writers, ſuch paſſages, where the ſentiments beſt expreſs the

the paſſions, and contraſt them with others, which fall ſhort of ſo neceſſary an union.

We ſhall furniſh the firſt example from Shakeſpeare, being ſentiments dictated by a violent and perturbed paſſion.

Lear. —— filial ingratitude!
Is it not, as if this mouth ſhould tear this hand
For lifting food to't? but I'll puniſh home;
No—I will weep no more—in ſuch a night
To ſhut me out! Pour on, I will endure.
In ſuch a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!
Your old kind father, whoſe frank heart gave all—
O! that way madneſs lies; let me ſhun that;
No more of that.

Kent. Good, my Lord, enter here.

Lear. Pr'ythee, go in thyſelf.—Seek thine own eaſe,
This tempeſt will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more: but I'll go in;
In, boy. Go firſt—you houſeleſs poverty—
Nay, get thee in; I'll pray, and then I'll ſleep—
Poor naked wretches, whereſoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitileſs ſtorm,
How ſhall your houſeleſs heads, and unfed ſides,
Your loop'd, and window'd raggedneſs defend you
From ſeaſons ſuch as theſe?—O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take phyſic pomp;
Expoſe thyſelf to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'ſt ſhake the ſuperflux to them,
And ſhew the heavens more juſt.

Lear, Act III. Scene 5th.

The following example is expreſſive of ſentiments ariſing from remorſe and deſpair.

Othello. Lo! I have a weapon:
A better never did itſelf ſuſtain

Upon

Upon a ſoldier's thigh. I've ſeen the day,
That with this little arm, and this good ſword,
I've made my way through more impediments
Than twenty times your ſtop. But, oh vain boaſt!
Who can controul his fate? 'tis not ſo now.
Be not afraid, though you do ſee me weapon'd;
Here is my journey's end—here is my butt,
The very ſea-mark of my utmoſt ſail.
Do you go back diſmay'd? 'tis a loſt fear,
Man but a ruſh againſt Othello's breaſt,
And he retires.—Where ſhould Othello go?
Now—How doſt thou look now? oh ill-ſtarr'd wench!
Pale as thy ſmock! when we ſhall meet at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my ſoul from heaven,
And fiends will ſnatch at it—cold—cold, my girl,
Ev'n like thy chaſtity—O curſed ſlave!
Whip me, ye devils——
From the poſſeſſion of this heavenly ſight;
Blow me about in winds, roaſt me in ſulphur,
Waſh me in ſteep-down gulphs of liquid fire——
Oh! Deſdemona! Deſdemona! dead! dead! oh! oh!

Othello, Act V. Scene 9th.

The ſentiments here diſplayed, flow ſo naturally from the paſſions repreſented, that we cannot conceive any imitation more perfect; but to proceed to more particular obſervations, paſſions ſeldom continue uniform any conſiderable time; they generally fluctuate, ſwelling, and ſubſiding by turns; often in a quick ſucceſſion; the ſentiments, therefore, cannot be juſt, unleſs they correſpond to ſuch fluctuation; nor can a climax be ſhewn better than in expreſſing a ſwelling paſſion; the following

following paſſages may ſuffice for an illuſtration:

Oroonoko. Can you raiſe the dead?
Purſue and overtake the wings of time?
And bring about again, the hours, the days,
The years, that made me happy?

Oroonoko, Act II. Scene 2d.

Almeria. How haſt thou charm'd
The wildneſs of the waves, and rocks to this?
That thus relenting, they have given thee back
To earth, to light, and life, to love, and me?

Mourning Bride, Act I. Scene 7th.

The following paſſage finely expreſſes the progreſs of conviction.

Let me not ſtir, nor breathe, leſt I diſſolve
That tender, lovely form of painted air
So like Almeria. Ha! it ſinks— it falls.
I'll catch it ere it goes, and graſp her ſhade,
'Tis life! 'tis warm! 'tis ſhe, 'tis ſhe herſelf!
It is Almeria! 'Tis—it is my wife!

Mourning Bride, Act II. Scene 6th.

In the progreſs of thought, our reſolutions become more vigorous, as well as our paſſions—

If ever I do yield, or give conſent
By any action, word, or thought, to wed
Another Lord; may then juſt heav'n ſhow'r down, &c.

Mourning Bride, Act I. Scene 1ſt.

A perſon ſometimes is agitated, at once, by different paſſions; and the mind, in that caſe, vibrating

vibrating like a pendulum, vents itſelf in ſentiments that partake of the ſame vibration, as in the three following inſtances :

Queen. Would I had never trod this Engliſh earth,
Or felt the flatteries that grow upon it!
Ye've angels faces, but heaven knows your hearts,
What ſhall become of me now! wretched lady!
I am the moſt unhappy woman living.
Alas! poor wenches! where are now your fortunes,
(To her women.)
Shipwreck'd upon a kingdom where no pity,
No friends, no hope! no kindred weep for me!
Almoſt no grave allow'd me.

Henry VIII. Act III. Scene 1ſt.

Othello. ——— oh! devil! devil!
If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,
Each drop ſhe falls, would prove a crocodile.
Out of my ſight.———
Deſdemona. I will not ſtay t'offend you, (going.)
Lodovico. Truly an obedient lady:
I do beſeech your lordſhip call her back.
Othello. Miſtreſs!
Deſ. My lord.
Oth. What would you with her, Sir?
Lod. Who, I, my lord?
Oth. Aye—You did wiſh that I would make her turn.
Sir—ſhe can turn, and turn, and yet go on;
And turn again—and ſhe can weep, Sir, weep;
And ſhe's obedient: as you ſay obedient,
Very obedient——proceed you in your tears—
Concerning this, Sir,—oh! well painted paſſion!
I am commanded home—get you away—
I'll ſend for you anon—Sir, I obey the mandate,
And will return to Venice. Hence avaunt.

Othello, Act IV. Scene 6th.

Oth.

Oth. How ſhall I murder him, Iago?

Iago. Did you perceive how he laugh'd at his vice?

Oth. Oh! Iago!

Iago. And did you ſee the handkerchief?

Oth. Was that mine?

Iago. Your's by this hand, and to ſee how he prizes
The fooliſh woman your wife—ſhe gave it him,
And he hath given it his whore.

Oth. Oh! I would have him nine years a killing.
A fine woman! a fair woman! a ſweet woman!

Iago. Nay, you muſt forget that———

Oth. Ay—let her rot, and periſh, and be damn'd to night, for ſhe ſhall not live.—No, my heart is turn'd to ſtone. I ſtrike it, and it hurts my hand—oh! the world hath not a ſweeter creature———She might lie by an emperor's ſide, and command him taſks.

Iago. Nay, that's not your way——

Oth. Hang her, I do but ſay what ſhe is—ſo delicate with her needle—an admirable muſician—oh! ſhe will ſing the ſavageneſs out of a bear.

Othello, Act IV. Scene 5th.

Another obſervation ſhould be attended to in the repreſentation of immoderate paſſions, that their genuine ſentiments ought to be hid, or diſſembled as much as poſſible, and this ſhould be particularly obſerved with reſpect to criminal paſſions; a perſon never counſels the commiſſion of a crime in plain terms: guilt muſt not appear in its native colours, even in thought; the propoſal muſt be made by hints, and by repreſenting the action in ſome favourable light. Of the propriety of ſentiment upon ſuch an occaſion, Shakeſpeare, in the

Tempeſt,

Tempeſt, has given us a beautiful example in the uſurping duke of Milan's ſpeech, adviſing Sebaſtian to murder his brother, the king of Naples.

Antonio. ——— what might
Worthy Sebaſtian—O what might—no more.
And yet methinks, I ſee it in thy face
What thou ſhould'ſt be: th' occaſion ſpeaks thee,
And my ſtrong imagination ſees a crown
Dropping upon thy head.

Act II. Scene 1ſt.

But the moſt perfect illuſtration of this kind, is that of king John ſoliciting Hubert to murder the young prince Arthur.

K. John. Come hither, Hubert. O my gentle Hubert,
We owe thee much; within this wall of fleſh
There is a ſoul counts thee her creditor,
And with advantage means to pay thy love.
And, my good friend, thy voluntary oath
Lives in this boſom, dearly cheriſhed.
Give me thy hand, I had a thing to ſay——
But I will fit it with ſome better time.
By heav'n, Hubert, I'm almoſt aſham'd
To ſay what good reſpect I have of thee.
Hubert. I'm much bounden to your majeſty.
K. John. Good friend, thou haſt no cauſe to ſay ſo;
Yet ———
But thou ſhalt have—and creep time ne'er ſo ſlow,
Yet it ſhall come for me to do thee good.
I had a thing to ſay—but let it go:
The ſun is in the heaven, and the proud day,
Attended with the pleaſures of the world,
Is all too wanton, and too full of gawds
To give me audience. If the midnight bell

Did

Did with his iron tongue, and brazen mouth,
Sound *one* into the drowſy race of night;
If this ſame were a church-yard where we ſtand,
And thou poſſeſſed with a thouſand wrongs;
Or, if that ſurly ſpirit melancholy
Had bak'd thy blood, and made it heavy-thick,
Which elſe runs trickling up and down the veins,
Making that Ideot laughter, keep mens eyes,
And ſtrain their cheeks to idle merriment,
(A paſſion hateful to my purpoſes)
Or, if that thou couldſt ſee me without eyes,
Hear me without thine ears, and make reply
Without a tongue, uſing conceit alone,
Without eyes, ears, and harmful ſounds of words;
Then in deſpight of broad-ey'd watchful day,
I would into thy boſom pour my thoughts.
But ah, I will not—yet I love thee well;
And, by my troth, I think thou lov'ſt me well.

Hubert. So well, that what you bid me undertake,
Though that my death were adjunct to the act,
By heav'n I'll do't.

K. John. Do not I know—thou would'ſt?
Good Hubert, Hubert—Hubert, throw thine eye
On yon young boy.—I'll tell thee what, the friend;
He is a very ſerpent in my way,
And whereſoe'er this foot of mine doth tread,
He lies before me. Do'ſt thou underſtand me?
Thou art his keeper.

King John, Act III. Scene 5th.

We come now to contraſt theſe examples with ſentiments that appear *faulty*, and the firſt claſs we ſhall begin with, are ſentiments which accord not with the paſſion, and are faulty, inſomuch that they are ſcrewed up beyond the proper key.

Othello.

Othello. ——— O my ſoul's joy!
If after every tempeſt come ſuch calms,
May the winds blow 'till they have waken'd death;
And let the labouring bark climb hills of ſeas
Olympus high, and duck again as low
As hell's from heaven!

Othello, Act II. Scene 6th.

However the above ſentiments may be ſuggeſted by violent and inflamed paſſion, they are not ſuited to the ſatisfaction, however great, we feel upon eſcaping danger.

Another example of the ſame kind.

Philaſter. Place me, ſome god, upon a pyramid
Higher than hills of earth, and lend a voice
Loud as your thunder to me, that from thence
I may diſcourſe to all the under world
The worth that dwells in him.

Philaſter, Act IV.

Sentiments too *artful* to be ſuggeſted by ſevere grief.

Almeria. O no! time gives encreaſe to my afflictions.
The circling hours that gather all the woes
Which are diffuſed through the revolving year,
Come heavy laden with th' oppreſſive weight
To me; with me ſucceſſively they leave
The ſighs—the tears, the groans—the reſtleſs cares,
And all the damps of grief, that did retard their flight;
They ſhake their downy wings, and ſcatter all
The dire collected dews on my poor head;
Then fly with joy, and ſwiftneſs from me.

Mourning Bride, Act I. Scene 1ſt.

In the ſame play, Almeria ſeeing a dead body, which ſhe takes to be Alphonſo's, again falls into ſentiments which are too artificial for the occaſion.

Had they, or hearts, or eyes, that did this deed?
Could eyes endure to guide ſuch cruel hands?
Are not my eyes guilty alike with theirs,
That thus can gaze, and yet not turn to ſtone?
—— I do not weep!—the ſprings of tears are dry'd,
And of a ſudden, I am calm, as if—
All things were well; and yet my huſband's murthered!
Yes, yes, I know to mourn, I'll ſluice this heart,
The ſource of woe, and let the torrent looſe.

Act V. Scene 11th.

Sentiments which degenerate into point, or conceit, however they may amuſe an idle hour, can never be the offſpring of any ſerious, or important paſſion. Thus Rowe, who has been in many parts ſucceſsful in the character of Jane Shore, yet makes her, in the following ſituation, deſcend into *antitheſis* and *affectation*, below the dignity of her mind——

—— Let me be branded for the public ſcorn,
Turn'd forth, and driven to wander like a vagabond,
Be friendleſs, and forſaken, ſeek my bread
Upon the barren wild, and deſolate waſte,
Feed on my ſighs, and drink my falling tears,
Ere I conſent to teach my lips injuſtice,
Or wrong the orphan who has none to ſave him.

Jane Shore, Act IV.

Sentiments introduced too early, or too late; when *Belvidera* tells her father *Priuli*, of the danger ſhe was in from her huſband's threatening to murder her, and which ought naturally to have alarmed him; inſtead of this, he diſſolves into that kind of tenderneſs for his daughter, as if he had already delivered her from danger.

Priuli. Can'ſt thou forgive me all my follies paſt?
I'll henceforth be indeed a father, never,
Never more thus expoſe, but cheriſh thee,
Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,
Dear as thoſe eyes that weep in fondneſs o'er thee:
Peace to thy heart.

Venice Preſerv'd, Act 5th.

Immoral ſentiments expoſed in their native colours, inſtead of being concealed, or diſguiſed: thus lady Macbeth, projecting the death of the king, has the following ſoliloquy.

—— The raven himſelf's not hoarſe
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come all you ſpirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unſex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe, topful
Of direct cruelty—make thick my blood,
Stop up th' acceſs, and paſſage to remorſe,
That no compunctious viſitings of nature
Shake my fell purpoſe. *Macbeth*, Act I. Scene 7th.

This ſpeech we cannot think natural; the moſt treacherous murder, we hope, was never per-

perpetrated by the moſt hardened miſcreant without compunction; in that ſtate of mind, it is a never-failing artifice of ſelf-deceit, to draw the thickeſt veil over the moſt wicked action, and to extenuate it by all the circumſtances which imagination can ſuggeſt; and if the mind even cannot bear diſguiſe, the next attempt is to thruſt it out from its counſel altogether, and ruſh in upon action without thought; this laſt was her huſband's method.

Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,
Which muſt be *acted*, ere they muſt be *ſcann'd*.

Act III. Scene 5th.

Congreve, in our opinion, errs on the ſame principle in the *Double Dealer*, where Maſkwell, inſtead of diſguiſing, or colouring his crimes, piques himſelf on them in the following ſoliloquy.

Cynthia, let thy beauty gild my crimes, and whatſoever I commit of treachery, or deceit, ſhall be imputed to me as a merit—treachery! What treachery? Love cancels all the bonds of friendſhip, and ſets men right upon their firſt foundations.

Double Dealer, Act II. Scene 8.

Sentiments inconſiſtent in themſelves.

——— Now bid me run,
And I will ſtrive with things impoſſible,
Yea, get the better of them.

Julius Cæſar, Act V. Scene laſt.

Sentiments which are mere rant.

Coriolanus ſpeaking to his mother.

——— What is this?
Your knees to me? to your corrected ſon?
Then let the pebbles on the hungry beach
Fillop the ſtars, then let the mutinous winds
Strike the proud cedars 'gainſt the fiery ſun;
Murd'ring impoſſibility, to make
What cannot be, ſlight work.

Coriolanus, Act V. Scene 3d.

Other examples of the ſame kind.

Cæſar. ——— Danger knows full well
That Cæſar is more dangerous than he.
We were two lions littered in one day,
And I the elder and more terrible.

Julius Cæſar, Act II. Scene 4th.

Ventidius. ——— But you—ere love miſled your wand'ring eyes,
Were ſure the chief, and beſt of human race,
Fram'd in the very pride, and boaſt of nature,
So perfect, that the gods who form'd you, wonder'd
At their own ſkill, and cried—"A lucky hit
Has mended our deſign."

Not to ſpeak of the impiety of this laſt ſentiment, it is ludicrous, inſtead of being lofty.

We could have ſwelled this laſt claſs to an immoderate ſize, from the *ravings* of LEE, and the declamations of more modern dramatiſts; (numbers of whom have ſcarcely

given ſpecimens enough of their underſtanding, to be incident to poor Lee's misfortune;)—but this, as well as all the other claſſes of *faulty* paſſages, we have ſelected from the moſt *approved authors*, for the purpoſe of ſhewing, what a neceſſity perſons of the greateſt genius are under, of correcting the firſt flights of imagination.

CAHP. X.

Of DICTION.

THOUGH the fable, the manners, and the ſentiments are, without doubt, the more conſiderable parts of tragedy; yet an improper diction renders the dialogue flat, however elevated the ſentiments may be; and though, to a critical mind, it doth not abſolutely deſtroy the ſtrength of the other parts, it, in general, throws ſuch a languor over them, as to conceal their beauties, and very often ſuppreſs their effect.

Diction, according to Ariſtotle's uſual laconic, yet critical definition, is *the explication of things by words*; hence elevated ſentiments require elevated language, tender ſentiments, words that are ſoft and flowing, plaintive ſentiments, humble and affecting; in ſhort, words being intimately connected with the ideas they repreſent, the greateſt harmony is required between them; and, as we have before obſerved, that the ſentiments ought to be tuned to the paſſion, ſo the language ſhould be in uniſon with both.

The firſt ideas which riſe in the ſoul, upon its receiving the impreſſion of ſome lively affection,

fection, and are commonly called ſentiments, have a power of affecting us, tho' expreſſed in the ſimpleſt terms, becauſe they ſpeak the language of the heart; Emilia, therefore, affects us, when ſhe ſays in the plaineſt words,

J'aime encore plus Cinna, que je ne hais Auguſte.

I love my Cinna, more than I deteſt Auguſtus.

A ſentiment would even ceaſe to be ſo moving, were it expreſſed in magnificent terms, and with pompous figures; Othello, for inſtance, would not engage us ſo much as he does, or ſhow us, at ſo ſhort a view, the combination of paſt circumſtances in his mind; if (when reminded by Iago, that as Deſdemona deceived her father, ſo ſhe might him) inſtead of dropping that ſimple, yet forcible expreſſion, "*and ſo ſhe did*;" he were to expreſs the ſame ſentiment in a figurative ſtile; affectation would then have diſcovered itſelf, after which adieu to the language of the heart.

And here one general rule will hold good in regard to diction; where characters make remarks upon their own, and the ſentiments of others; where recitals and deſcriptions are

to be introduced; and, in ſhort, all that is not properly ſentiment, require, as much as the nature of the piece, and probability will admit of, to be repreſented to us by images, capable of fixing themſelves in our imagination.

We except, however, from this general rule, the recitals of prodigious events made juſt after they have happened; 'tis likely, that an ocular witneſs to theſe events, ſuch as ought to be employed in the narration, was ſtruck with a ſurpriſe from which he has not yet recovered; it would be therefore, contrary to the rules of probability, for him to uſe ſuch figures in his recital, as occur not to a perſon that is frightened, and who has no thoughts of being pathetic; beſides, thoſe prodigious events require the poet's attention to procure, as much as poſſible, the ſpectator's aſſent; and the moſt certain way of obtaining it, is to give the recital in the plaineſt terms, and ſuch as are the leaſt capable of rendering the perſon who ſpeaks, liable to be ſuſpected of exaggeration.

But as we have, in the preceding chapter, illuſtrated the theory of ſentiments by examples, we ſhall purſue the ſame method in this, as the moſt eligible for perſpicuity and inſtruction.

The firſt example we ſhall give, is an obſervation of Ariſtotle's upon Homer, when re-

pre-

preſenting the terrible noiſe which enraged waters make; he ſays, "the rivers *roared.*" Now ſays Ariſtotle, very juſtly, ſhould any one ſay "the rivers *cried,*" ſuch an alteration would change a choice and noble phraſe, into one as proportionably mean and little.

Pleaſant emotions which elevate, or ſwell the mind, ſhould vent themſelves in ſtrong epithets and figurative expreſſions, but humbling and diſpiriting paſſions affect to ſpeak plain; for figurative expreſſion, being the effect of an enlivened imagination, cannot be the language of anguiſh, or diſtreſs. Otway, ſenſible of this laſt, has painted a ſcene of diſtreſs in colours, finely adapted to the ſubject; there is ſcarce a figure in it, except a ſhort and natural ſimile, with which the ſpeech is introduced.

Belvidera, talking to her father of her huſband;

Think you ſaw what paſs'd at our laſt parting;
Think you beheld him like a raging lion,
Pacing the earth, and tearing up his ſteps,
Fate in his eyes, and roaring with the pain
Of burning fury; think you ſaw his one hand,
Fix'd on my throat, while the extended other
Graſp'd a keen threatn'ing dagger; oh! 'twas thus
We laſt embrac'd, when trembling with revenge,
He dragg'd me to the ground, and at my boſom
Preſented horrid death; cried out "my friends,

Where are my friends?" ſwore, wept, rag'd, threat'n'd, lov'd;
For he yet lov'd, and that dear love preſerved me
To this laſt trial of a father's pity—

Venice Preſerved, Act V.

To ſay, in *plain terms*, that there is no great merit in gaining the affections of a man who is of an amorous diſpoſition; but that it is a fine thing to make a perſon fall in love, who has never ſhewn any propenſity towards this paſſion, would be only a common truth which would hardly engage our attention; but when *Racine* puts this very truth into the mouth of *Aricia*, the thought, trivial as it is, is formed by his expreſſions into an eloquent ſpeech.

Pour moi, je ſuis plus fiere, et fuis la gloire aiſée
D'arracher un hommage à mille autres offert,
Et d'entrer dans un cœur de toutes parts ouvert.
Mais de faire fléchir un courage inflexible
De porte, la douleur dans une ame inſenſible
D'enchainer un captiff de ſes fers étonné,
Contre un joug qui lui plaît vainement mutiné
Voilà ce qui me plaît, violà ce qui m'irrite.

TRANSLATION.

But I thoſe eaſy conqueſts can deſpiſe,
To force a tribute from a vulgar breaſt,
Or ſtorm a heart that's open on all ſides.
But to ſubdue a proud obdurate mind,
To give a ſenſe of pain to cruel ſouls,
To lead a captive at his chains ſurpris'd,
Rebelling vainly 'gainſt a pleaſing yoke,
This is my chief ambition, and delight.

For

For a perſon likewiſe to ſay ſimply, that *Alexander was a perſuaſive lover*; ſuch a character would have nothing new, or affecting in it, becauſe it has been applicable to many, and the manner of *wording* it, leaves no conſiderable impreſſion; yet Lee ſublimes this thought to one of the greateſt beauties of our language, in the following ſingle line:

"Then he would talk!——Good gods, how he would talk!"

As theſe few ſpecimens will be ſufficient to ſhew the neceſſary union between *ſentiments* and *diction*, we ſhall add ſome examples where this union is violated.

Of diction elevated above the tone of the ſentiment.

Zara. —— —— Swift as occaſion I
Myſelf will fly; and earlier than the morn
Wake thee to freedom. Now 'tis late; and yet
Some news, few minutes paſt arriv'd, which ſeem'd
To ſhake the temper of the king—Who knows
What racking cares diſeaſe a monarch's bed?
Or love, that late at night, ſtill lights his lamp,
And ſtrikes his rays through duſk, and folded lids
Forbidding reſt, may ſtretch his eyes awake,
And force their balls abroad at this dead hour.

Mourning Bride, Act III. Scene 4.

The commoneſt obſerver cannot but ſee, in this inſtance, that the diction is by far too pompous,

pompous and laboured, for deſcribing ſo ſimple a circumſtance as abſence of ſleep.

As imagery, and figurative expreſſion are diſcordant in the higheſt degree with the agony of a mother, who is deprived of two hopeful ſons by a brutal murder; therefore the following paſſage is a ſpecimen of diction too light and airy for ſo intenſe a paſſion.

Queen. —— Ah! my poor princes! Ah my tender babes!
My unblown flowers, new appearing ſweets!
If yet your gentle ſouls fly in the air,
And be not fix'd in doom perpetual,
Hover about me with your airy wings,
And hear your mother's lamentation.

Richard III. Act IV. Scene 4.

A thought that turns upon the expreſſion inſtead of the ſubject, commonly called a *play of words*, is unworthy of that compoſition which pretends to any degree of elevation; yet Shakeſpeare has made this ſacrifice to the age he lived in, in many inſtances, particularly in the following:

Laertes upon his firſt hearing of his ſiſter's death.

Laertes. Alas! then ſhe is drown'd.
Queen. Drown'd.

Laertes.

Laertes. Too much of *water* hadſt thou poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears.

Hamlet, Act IV. Scene laſt.

Antony ſpeaking of Julius Cæſar.

O *world!* thou wa'ſt the foreſt of this *hart*;
And this, indeed, O *world*, the *heart* of thee.
How like a deer, ſtricken by many princes,
Doſt thou here lie!

Julius Cæſar, Act III. Scene 3.

But though Shakeſpeare has thus deſcended to a play of words, he has ſometimes introduced it for the marking a peculiar character, as in the following paſſage:

King Philip. What ſay'ſt thou, boy? look in the lady's face.

Lewis. I do my lord, and in her eye I find a wonder, or a wondrous miracle.—The ſhadow of myſelf form'd in her eye; being but the ſhadow of your *ſon*,
Becomes a *ſun*, and makes your *ſon* a ſhadow.
I do proteſt I never lov'd myſelf,
'Till now infix'd I beheld myſelf
Drawn in the flattering table of her eye.

Faulconbridge. Drawn in the flattering table of her eye!
Hang'd in the frowning wrinkle of her brow!
And quarter'd in her heart! he doth eſpy
Himſelf love's traitor, this is pity now
That hang'd, and drawn, and quartered, there ſhould be,
In ſuch a love, ſo vile a lout as he.——

King John, Act II. Scene 5.

One ſhould think it unneceſſary to enter a caveat againſt expreſſions which have no meaning, or, at leaſt, no diſtinct meaning; and

and yet ſomewhat of this kind may be found even amongſt otherwiſe reſpectable writers. We ſhall give the following ſpecimen from Dryden.

Cleopatra queſtioning Charmion of Antony's conſtancy.

Cleo. Now, what news, my Charmion?
Will he be kind? and will he not forſake me?
Am I to live, or die? nay, do I live?
Or am I dead? for when he gave his anſwer,
Fate took the word, and then I liv'd or died.

All For Love, Act II.

But nothing can be finer ridiculed than this *laſt ſpecimen*, in the following couplet of the witty Duke of Buckingham.

Wa'ſt not unjuſt to raviſh hence her breath,
And in life's ſtead, to leave us nought but death.

Rehearſal, Act IV. Scene 1.

In ſhort,—*diction* cannot be better wound up than in the following ſhort definition of it, given by Lord Kaimes; to whoſe critical pen, we likewiſe hold ourſelves obliged for ſeveral of the dramatic quotations in this and the preceding chapter.

" Language may be conſidered as the dreſs of thought; and where the one is not ſuited to the other, we are ſenſible of the incongruity, in the ſame manner, as where a judge

is

is dreſſed like a fop, or a peaſant like a man of quality."

It will be neceſſary, however, before we cloſe this ſubject, to ſay ſomething of that ſpecies of verſe which is generally held to be beſt ſuited to tragedy.

Ariſtotle lays it down as a rule, "that 'tis beſt to write tragedy in that kind of verſe that is the *leaſt* ſuch, or which is neareſt proſe."

Amongſt the antients, this was the *Iambick*; with us, it is *blank verſe*; but as the wits of Charles the Second's days, moſtly wrote their plays in *rhyme*; and, as there are not wanting, even in our days, ſome advocates for this method, as well as ſome practitioners in it, we ſhall make a few general obſervations on it's impropriety.

It is a matter of little conſequence, whether we received this manner of writing originally from our own countrymen, or the French, who practiſe it to this day. One thing we are ſure of, that before Shakeſpeare's time, our anceſtors all wrote in this way; or, to ſpeak more properly, *knew no better*; but as it was reſerved for this favourite child of *nature*, to deſtroy every thing which militated againſt his *parent*, ſo *rhyme* fell a ſacrifice, in common, with the other abſurdities of the drama; the authorities of Fletcher and

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Ben Jonſon ſupported Shakeſpeare; and except the ſhort revival of it in the *rhyming* reign of Charles II. when the muſes had not, for ſome time, recovered themſelves from the ruins of monarchy, it has ever ſince been juſtly baniſhed our ſtage.

And indeed, when we conſider the many objections that lie againſt the uſe of rhyme on the ſtage, the wonder will not be, how we came to leave it off, but how we could ever ſubmit to it? for, as a play is an imitation of nature, and ſince no man, without premeditation, ſpeaks in rhyme, neither ought he to do it on the ſtage; to be ſure, the fancy may be there elevated to a higher pitch of thought than it is in ordinary diſcourſe, as there is a probability, that men of excellent and quick parts, may ſpeak noble things extempore; but thoſe thoughts are never fettered with numbers without ſtudy, and therefore, it muſt be unnatural to repreſent the moſt free way of ſpeaking under that which is moſt conſtrained.

But, it is ſaid, the quickneſs of repartees in argumentative ſcenes, receive an ornament from verſe; now, what is more unreaſonable than to imagine, that a man ſhould not only conceive the wit, but the rhyme too on a ſudden; this following of him who ſpoke before, both in ſound and meaſure, is ſo great a happineſs, that we muſt, at leaſt, ſuppoſe the

the Dramatis Perſonæ to be born poets; if we do not this, it will look rather like the deſign of two, than the anſwer of one; it will appear that your actors hold intelligence together; that they perform their tricks, like fortune-tellers, by confederacy, and that great maxim of all profeſſions,

"*Ars eſt celare artem*"

will be entirely deſtroyed. It will not ſerve for an objection that carries any weight with it; that a play is known to be a play, however you manage it, and conſequently the dialogue of two, or more perſons, underſtood to be the language but of one poet; for though we know we are to be deceived, and we deſire to be ſo, no reaſonable man was ever yet deceived, but with a probability of truth; thus we ſufficiently underſtand, that the ſcenes which repreſent cities, and countries to us, are not really ſuch, but only painted on boards and canvaſs; but ſhall that excuſe their want of compoſition and colouring? ought they not rather to be laboured with ſo much the more diligence and exactneſs, on account of their principal uſe being to help the imagination, which is only to be deceived under the ſtrongeſt appearances of truth?

If rhyme is incapable of expreſſing the greateſt thoughts naturally, the loweſt it cannot without a great deal of abſurdity; what is more unbefitting the majeſty of verſe, than to call a ſervant, or bid a door be ſhut in rhyme? there is an air of ridicule in dreſſing up ſo familiar a command in the dignity of meaſure, ſufficient to unrealize the dialogue which follows, and make the moſt important circumſtance appear bombaſtical, yet ſome of our greateſt poets, who have written tragedies in rhyme, have been forced on this miſerable neceſſity.

We are ſufficiently aware, however, that in condemning the practice of rhyme, we have ſome reſpectable authorities againſt us, and in particular Mr. Dryden, one of the greateſt poets this country can boaſt of; but as, on the one ſide, the eſpouſal of any error, let it be never ſo formidably ſupported, can never make it leſs ſo; ſo on the other, it is but fair to inveſtigate what accidental cauſes may contribute to that ſupport.

It is allowed, on all hands, that the great ſtrength of Mr. Dryden's genius began to unfold itſelf rather late in life; in Milton's time, (when Dryden was between thirty and forty) that great man, who was acquainted with him, would never allow him to be more than

than a *happy verſifier*; his writings then, though we will not ſay that they abſolutely confirm this report, yet they, in ſome reſpect, favour it; as his beſt plays were written between forty and fifty, and his *Alexander's Feaſt*, which many call his *Chef d'Oeuvre*, at the very advanced age of between ſixty and ſeventy; from theſe facts then, we may conclude, that upon his outſet in the literary world, (which was about the time of the reſtoration) he was rather a *follower* than a *leader* of the drama; ſo that rhyme being the falſe taſte of thoſe times, and his talents lying ſtrongly on that ſide, he became a practitioner from *faſhion*, and was ſupported in it from *inclination*: when his judgement, however, matured, it is more than probable he ſaw his error, but his pride would not ſuffer him to recant, as ſuch a recantation muſt be attended with the overthrow of a great number of his works; which, on the general credit of his name, were held in reputation. Hence he wrote his eſſay on dramatic poetry, principally to vindicate the authority of rhyme; but ſuch is the irreſiſtible force of truth, that even in this eſſay, the arguments that he has raiſed againſt it, he was not able himſelf to throw down; ſo that he became a dupe to his vanity, at a time that he endeavoured moſtly to guard againſt it, by the involuntary force of his judgement.

CHAP. XI.

Of the THREE UNITIES;—ACTION, TIME, *and* PLACE.

WHEN we conſider the chain of cauſes and effects in the material world, independent of purpoſe, deſign, or thought, we find a number of incidents, in ſucceſſion, without beginning, middle, or end: every thing that happens is, in different reſpects, both a cauſe, and an effect, being the effect of what goes before, and the cauſe of what follows; one incident may affect us more, another leſs, but all of them important, or trivial, are ſo many links in the univerſal chain; which the mind, in viewing, cannot ſettle ultimately upon any one, but is carried along in the train, without any cloſe.

But when the intellectual world is taken under view, in conjunction with the material, the ſcene is varied. Man acts with deliberation and choice; he aims at ſome end, ſuch as riches, conqueſt, patriotiſm, &c. he propoſes means, and lays plans to attain the end propoſed. Here are a number of facts, or incidents leading to the end in view; the whole

whole connected into one chain, by the relation of cauſation; in running over a ſeries of ſuch facts, or incidents, we cannot reſt upon any one, becauſe they are preſented to us as means only, leading to ſome end, but we reſt with ſatisfaction upon the ultimate event, becauſe there, the purpoſe, or aim of the chief perſon, or perſons is brought to a final concluſion. This indicates the beginning, the middle, and the end, of what Ariſtotle calls an entire action; the ſtory naturally begins with deſcribing thoſe circumſtances, which move the diſtinguiſhed perſon to form a plan, in order to compaſs ſome deſired event: the proſecution of that plan, and the obſtructions, carry the reader into the heat of action; the middle is, properly, where the action is moſt involved; and the end is, where the event is brought about, and the plan accompliſhed.

We have given the foregoing example of a plan crowned with ſucceſs, becauſe it affords the cleareſt conception of a beginning, a middle, and an end, in which conſiſts *unity of action*; and indeed ſtricter unity cannot be imagined than in that caſe; but an action may have unity, or a beginning, middle, and end, without ſo intimate a relation of parts; as where the cataſtrophe is different

from what is intended or deſired, which frequently happens in our beſt tragedies.

If unity of action be a capital beauty in a fable, imitative of human affairs, a plurality of unconnected fables muſt be a capital defect. For the ſake of variety, we indulge an under-plot that is connected with the principal event; but two unconnected events are a great deformity, and it leſſens the deformity but very little to engage the ſame actors in both; in ſhort, a play analyzed, is a chain of connected facts, of which each ſcene makes a link; each ſcene, accordingly, ought to produce ſome incident relative to the cataſtrophe, by advancing, or retarding it; a ſcene that produces no incident, (and for that reaſon may be called *barren*) ought not to be indulged, becauſe it breaks, or at leaſt ſuſpends, the unity of action, and the chain would be complete without it. It will be no juſtification to ſay, that they help to diſplay characters; it were better, like Dryden, in his *dramatis perſonæ*, to deſcribe them before-hand, which would not break the chain of action; but a writer of genius has no occaſion for ſuch artifice, he can diſplay the characters of his perſonages much more to the life in ſentiment and action. How ſucceſsfully is this done by Shakeſpeare, in whoſe

whoſe works there is ſcarcely to be found a ſingle barren ſcene!

Upon the whole, it appears, that all the incidents in a dramatic fable, ought to have a mutual connection, by their common relation to the grand event; and in this relation conſiſts the UNITY OF ACTION.

How far the unities of *time* and *place* are eſſential, is a queſtion of greater intricacy; theſe unities were ſtrictly obſerved in the Grecian and Roman theatres, and they are inculcated by the French and Engliſh critics, as eſſential to every dramatic compoſition; in theory, theſe unities are alſo acknowledged by our beſt poets, tho' their practice ſeldom correſponds; they are often forced to take liberties, which they pretend not to juſtify, againſt the practice of the Greeks and Romans, and againſt the ſolemn deciſion of their own countrymen: but, in the proſecution of this ſubject, we ſhall enquire, whether we are under a ſtrict neceſſity to copy the ancients in theſe two unities? and whether our critics are not guilty of a miſtake, in admitting no greater latitude in time and place than was admitted in Greece and Rome.

A review of the Grecian drama, compared with our own, may, perhaps, aſſiſt us in this

enquiry. We have before obſerved, that tragedy in Greece, was derived from the hymns in praiſe of Bacchus, which were ſung in parts by a chorus: Theſpis, to relieve the ſingers, and, for the ſake of variety, introduced one actor, whoſe province it was to explain hiſtorically the ſubject of the ſong, and who occaſionally repreſented one, or other perſonage; Eſchylus introducing a ſecond actor, formed the dialogue, by which the performance became dramatic, and the actors were multiplied, when the ſubject repreſented made it neceſſary; but ſtill the chorus, which gave a beginning to tragedy, was conſidered as an eſſential part of its conſtitution. The firſt ſcene generally unfolds the preliminary circumſtances that lead to the grand event, and this ſcene is, by Ariſtotle, termed the *prologue*; in the ſecond ſcene, where the action properly begins, the chorus is introduced, which, as originally, continues upon the ſtage during the whole performance; the chorus frequently mix in the dialogue, and when the dialogue happens to be ſuſpended, the chorus, during the interval, are employed in ſinging. Sophocles adheres to this plan religiouſly; Euripides is not altogether ſo correct; in ſome of his pieces, it becomes neceſſary to remove the chorus; but when that unuſual ſtep is riſqued, matters are ſo ordered,

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as to make their abſence but momentary, nor does the removal of the chorus interrupt the repreſentation; they never leave the ſtage of their own accord, but at the command of ſome principal perſonage, who conſtantly waits their return.

Thus the Grecian drama is a continued repreſentation without any interruption, a circumſtance that merits attention. A continued repreſentation without a pauſe, affords no opportunity to vary the place of action, nor to prolong the time of the action beyond that of the repreſentation; to a repreſentation, therefore, ſo confined in place, and time, the foregoing reaſoning is ſtrictly applicable; a real, or feigned action that is brought to a concluſion, after conſiderable intervals of time, and frequent changes of place, cannot, accurately, be copied in a repreſentation that admits no latitude in either; hence it is, that the unities of *place*, and *time* were, or ought to have been ſtrictly obſerved in the Grecian tragedies, which are made neceſſary by the very conſtitution of their drama; for it is abſurd to compoſe a tragedy that cannot be juſtly repreſented.

Thoſe critics, therefore, who for our drama pretend to eſtabliſh rules founded on the practice of the Greeks, do not ſee that the unities of *place* and *time*, ſo much vaunted

ed of, were in Greece a matter of neceſſity, not choice, and that if *we* ſubmit to ſuch rules, it muſt be from choice, not neceſſity; and this will appear evident upon taking a view of the conſtitution of our drama, which differs widely from that of Grece, but whether, more, or leſs perfect, is a different point.

By dropping the chorus in our drama, an opportunity is afforded to divide the repreſentation by intervals of time, or acts, during which the ſtage is totally evacuated, and the ſpectacle ſuſpended; this conſtitution qualifies us for ſubjects ſpread through a wide ſpace both of time, and place; the time ſuppoſed to paſs, during the ſuſpenſion of the repreſentation, is not meaſured by the time of the ſuſpenſion, nor is any connection formed between the box we ſit in, and the place where things are ſuppoſed to be tranſacted in our abſence; by which means, many ſubjects can be juſtly repreſented in our theatres, that were excluded from antient Greece.

But this doctrine may be better illuſtrated by an example. Let us ſuppoſe, five hiſtorical pictures, (the hiſtory of Alexander's battles by Le Brun) each of theſe pictures reſembles an act in one of our plays; there muſt neceſſarily be the ſtricteſt unity of place, and time,

time, in each picture, and the ſame neceſſity requires theſe two unities during each act of a play, becauſe during an act, there is no interruption in the ſpectacle; now when we view in ſucceſſion, ſuch a number of pictures, we have no difficulty to conceive that months, or years, have paſſed between the events exhibited in two different pictures, though the interruption is imperceptible in paſſing our eye from the one to the other, and we have as little difficulty to conceive a change of place, however great; in which view, there is truly no difference between five acts of a modern play, and five ſuch pictures.

When the repreſentation is ſuſpended, we can, with the greateſt facility ſuppoſe any length of time, or any change of place; the ſpectator it is true, may be conſcious, that the real time, and place, are not the ſame, with what are employed in the repreſentation; but this is a work of reflection, and by the ſame line, he may alſo be conſcious that Garrick is not king Lear, that the playhouſe is not Dover Cliffs, nor the noiſe he hears thunder, and lightning; in a word, after an intertuption of repreſentation, it is not more difficult for a ſpectator to imagine a new place, or a different time, than at the commencement of the play to imagine himſelf

ſelf at Rome, or in a period of time, two thouſand years back; and indeed it muſt appear ridiculous that a critic, who is willing to hold candle-light for ſun-ſhine, and ſome painted canvaſſes for a palace, ſhould affect ſo much difficulty in imagining a latitude of *place*, or *time*, beyond what is neceſſary in the repreſentation.

There are we acknowledge, ſome effects of great latitude in time that ought never to be indulged in a compoſition for the theatre; nothing can be more abſurd, than at the end of the play to exhibit a full grown perſon, who appears a child at the beginning; the mind rejects, as contrary to all probability, ſuch a latitude of time; the greateſt change from place to place, cannot have the ſame bad effect, in the bulk of human affairs, place is not ſo very material, as the mind when occupied with any intereſting event, is little attentive to minute circumſtances, becauſe they ſcarcely make any impreſſion.

But though we have thus taken arms to reſcue ſome of our beſt poets from the deſpotiſm of antient critics, we would not be underſtood to juſtify liberty without any reſerve. An unbounded licence with relation to *place*, and *time*, is faulty for a reaſon that ſeems to be overlooked; that it ſeldoms fails to break in upon the *unity of action*. In the

the ordinary courſe of human affairs, ſingle events, ſuch as are fit to be repreſented on the ſtage, are confined to a narrow ſpot, and generally employ no great extent of time, we accordingly, ſeldom find ſtrict unity of action in a dramatic compoſition, where any remarkable latitude is indulged in theſe particulars; we muſt ſay, further, that a compoſition which employs but one place, and requires not a greater length of time, than is neceſſary for the repreſentation, is ſo much the more perfect, becauſe the confining an event within ſo narrow bounds, contributes to the unity of action, and alſo prevents that labour, however ſlight, which the mind muſt undergo, in imagining frequent changes of place, and many intervals of time: but ſtill we muſt be ſo far an advocate for the moderns, that ſuch limitation of time, and place, as was neceſſary in the Grecian drama, is no guide to us, and therefore, though it may add, in *point of rule*, one beauty more to the compoſition, it is at beſt but a refinement, which may juſtly give place to a thouſand beauties more ſubſtantial; and we may add, that it is extremely difficult (if not impracticable) to contract within the Grecian limits, any fable ſo fruitful of incidents in number, and variety, as to give full ſcope to the fluctuation of paſſion.

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It may now appear, that critics who put the unities of *place*, and *time*, upon the ſame footing with the *unity of action*, making them all equally eſſential, have not attended to the nature, and conſtitution of the modern drama; if they admit an interrupted repreſentation, with which no writer finds fault, it is plainly abſurd to condemn its greateſt advantage, that of repreſenting many intereſting ſubjects excluded from the Grecian ſtage: if there needs muſt be a reformation, why not reſtore the antient chorus, and the antient continuity of action? There is certainly no medium, for to admit an interruption without relaxing from the ſtrict unities of place, and time, is, in effect, to load us with all the inconveniences of the antient drama, and, at the ſame time, to with-hold from us its advantages.

The queſtion therefore comes to this, whether our model be an improvement, or not? And in order to a comparative trial, ſome particulars muſt be premiſed. When a play begins, we have no difficulty to adjuſt our imagination to the ſcene of action, however diſtant it be in time, or in place; becauſe we know that the play is a repreſentation only; our ſituation is very different after we are engaged; it is the perfection of repreſentation to hide itſelf; to impoſe upon

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the ſpectator, and to produce in him an impreſſion of reality; but any interruption annihilates that impreſſion, by rouſing him out of his waking dream, and unhappily reſtoring him to his ſenſes; ſo difficult it is to ſupport the impreſſion of reality, that much ſlighter interruptions than the interval between two acts are ſufficient to diſſolve the charm, in the fifth act of the Mourning Bride, the three firſt ſcenes are in a room of ſtate, the fourth in a priſon, and the change is only operated by the ſhifting a ſcene, but however quick the tranſition may be, it is impracticable to impoſe upon the ſpectators, ſo as to make them conceive that they are actually carried from the palace to the priſon; they immediately recollect that both are imaginary, and the whole a fiction.

From theſe premiſes one will be naturally led, at firſt view, to pronounce the frequent interruptions in the modern drama to be an imperfection; it will occur, "That every interruption muſt have the effect to baniſh the dream of reality, and with it to baniſh our concern, which cannot ſubſiſt while we are conſcious that all is a fiction; and therefore, that in the modern drama, ſufficient time is not afforded for fluctuation, and ſwelling of paſſion, like what is afforded in that

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of Greece, where there is no interruption." This reaſoning it muſt be owned, has a ſpecious appearance 'till we examine it with cloſer attention.

In looking narrowly into the antient drama, we find that though the repreſentation is never interrupted; the principal action is ſuſpended not leſs frequently than in the modern drama; the only difference is, that, in the former, when the action is ſuſpended, as it is at the end of every act, opportunity is taken of the interval, to employ the chorus in ſinging; hence it appears, that the Grecian continuity of repreſentation cannot have the effect to prolong the impreſſion of reality; to baniſh that impreſſion, a ſuſpenſion of the action, whilſt the chorus is employed in ſinging, is no leſs operative than a total ſuſpenſion of the repreſentation.

But to open a larger view of this queſtion, it will not be very difficult to ſhew, that a continued repreſentation, without a ſingle pauſe even in the principal action, ſo far from an advantage, would be an imperfection; and that a repreſentation, with proper pauſes, is better qualified for moving the audience, and giving livelier impreſſions. This will be more evident from the following conſiderations.

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Repreſentation cannot very long ſupport an impreſſion of reality; for when the ſpirits are exhauſted by cloſe attention, and by the agitation of paſſion, an uneaſineſs enſues, which never fails to baniſh the waking dream. Now ſuppoſing, that an act requires as much time as can be employed, with ſtrict attention, upon any incident, (a ſuppoſition that cannot be far from truth) it follows, that the impreſſion of reality would not be prolonged beyond the time of an act, even ſuppoſing a continued repreſentation; if ſo, a continued repreſentation of longer endurance than an act, inſtead of giving a ſcope to the ſwell of the paſſions, would over-ſtrain the attention, and produce a total abſence of mind. In this reſpect, the four pauſes have a fine effect; for by affording to the audience a ſeaſonable reſpite, when the impreſſion of reality is gone, they relieve the mind from its fatigue, and conſequently prevent a wandering of thought, poſſibly at the very time of the moſt intereſting ſcenes.

In one article, indeed, it muſt be confeſſed, the Grecian model has greatly the advantage; its chorus, during an interval, not only preſerves alive the impreſſion made upon the audience, but alſo prepares their hearts for ſucceſſive impreſſions; in our theatres, on the contrary, the audience, at the end of every act, carried away by a jig of Vivaldi's, or

a concerto of Giardini's, loſe every warm impreſſion relative to the piece, and begin again cool and unconcerned, as at the commencement of the repreſentation. This we have long thought a groſs defect, but luckily not incurable; to revive the Grecian chorus, would be to revive the Grecian ſlavery of place and time; but may we not figure a detached chorus, coinciding with a pauſe in the repreſentation, as the antient chorus did with a pauſe in the principal action? What objection, for example, can there lie againſt muſic between the acts, vocal and inſtrumental, *adapted to the ſubject?* Such detached chorus, without putting us under any limitation of time and place, would recruit the ſpirits, and preſerve entire the tone, if not the tide of paſſion. The muſic, after an act, ſhould commence in the tone of the preceding paſſion, and be gradually varied till it accord with the tone of the paſſion that is to ſucceed in the next act; the muſic and the repreſentation would both of them be gainers by this conjunction, which will thus appear: muſic that accords with the preſent tone of mind is, upon that account doubly agreeable; and accordingly, though muſic ſingly may not have power to raiſe ſo ſtrong a paſſion as tragic ſentiments, yet it tends greatly to ſupport a paſſion already raiſed; further,

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it prepares us for the paſſion that follows, by inſpiring chearful, tender, melancholy, or animated impreſſions as the ſubject requires; take for example, the opening of the *Mourning Bride*, how ſympathetically are we prepared for Almeria's diſtreſſes by the ſoft muſic which precedes and accompanies the drawing up of the curtain?

Thus muſic and repreſentation ſupport each other powerfully, the impreſſion made upon the audience by the repreſentation, is a fine preparation for the muſic that ſucceeds; and the impreſſion made by the muſic, is equally ſo for the repreſentation which follows; it appears to us, therefore, fully evident, that by ſome ſuch contrivance, the modern drama may be improved, ſo as to enjoy the advantages of the ancient chorus, without its rigid (we had almoſt ſaid *ſlaviſh*) limitation of *time*, and *place*, and muſical compoſers for the ſtage, would be reduced to the happy neceſſity of ſtudying, and imitating nature, inſtead of deviating, according to the preſent mode, into wild and ungovernable conceits.

But to return more cloſely to the ſubject. The numberleſs improprieties forced upon the Greek dramatic poets by the conſtitution of their drama, are, of themſelves, we ſhould think, a ſufficient reaſon for preferring that

of the moderns, even abſtracted from the improvement propoſed; to prepare the reader for this article, it muſt be premiſed, that as in the antient drama, the place of action never varies, a place neceſſary muſt be choſen, to which every perſon may have acceſs without any improbability; this confines the ſcene to ſome open place, generally the court, or area before a palace, which excludes from the Grecian theatre tranſactions within doors, though theſe commonly are the moſt important.

Such a cruel reſtraint is, of itſelf, ſufficient to cramp the moſt pregnant invention, and accordingly the Grecian writers, in order to preſerve unity of place, are reduced to the greateſt improprieties; in the Hippolytus of Euripides *, Phædra, diſtreſſed in mind and body, is carried without any pretext from her palace, to the place of action; ſhe is there laid upon a couch, unable to ſupport herſelf, and made to utter many things improper to be heard by a number of women who form the chorus; what is ſtill worſe, her female attendant uſes the ſtrongeſt intreaties to make her reveal the ſecret cauſe of her anguiſh; which at laſt Phædra, contrary to decency and probability, is prevailed upon to do in preſence of that very chorus †.

Alceſtes,

* Act 1ſt, Scene 6th. † Act 2d, Scene 2d.

Alceſtes, in Euripides, at the point of death, is brought from the palace to the place of action, groaning and lamenting her untimely fate *. In the Trachiniens of Sophocles †, a ſecret is imparted to Dejanira, the wife of Hercules, in preſence of the chorus. In the tragedy of *Iphigenia*, the meſſenger employed to inform Clytemneſtra, that Iphigenia was ſacrificed, ſtops ſhort at the place of action, and with a loud voice, calls the queen from her palace to hear the news. Again, in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the neceſſary preſence of the chorus forces Euripides into a groſs abſurdity, which is to form a ſecret in their hearing; and to diſguiſe the abſurdity, much courtſhip is beſtowed on the chorus, not one woman, but a number, to engage them to ſecrecy. In the *Medea* of Euripides likewiſe, that princeſs makes no difficulty, in preſence of the chorus, to plot the death of her huſband, his miſtreſs, and her own father, the king of Corinth, all by poiſon; it was neceſſary to bring Medea upon the ſtage, and there is but one place of action, which is always occupied by the chorus; this ſcene cloſes the ſecond act; and, in the end of the third, ſhe frankly makes the chorus her confidants, in plotting the murder of her own children. Terence too, by identity of place, is often forced to make a con-

* Act 2d, Scene 1ſt. † Act 2d.

converſation within doors loud enough for the open ſtreet; inſomuch that the cries of a woman in labour, are heard there diſtinctly.

The Grecian poets are not more happy in reſpect to time, than to place: In the Hippolytus of Euripides, that prince is baniſhed at the end of the fourth act; and in the firſt ſcene of the following act, a meſſenger relates to Theſeus the whole particulars of the death of Hippolytus by the ſea monſter; that remarkable event muſt have employed many hours; and yet, in the repreſentation, it is confined to the time employed by the chorus, upon the ſong at the end of the 4th act; this inconſiſtency is ſtill greater in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in the 5th act, ſcene 4th, as the ſong could not exhauſt half an hour, and yet the incidents, ſuppoſed to have happened during that time, could not naturally be tranſacted in leſs than half a day.

The antients are forced, not leſs frequently to tranſgreſs another rule, derived alſo from a continued repreſentation, which is, that as a vacuum, however momentary, interrupts the repreſentation; it is neceſſary the place of action be conſtantly occupied. Sophocles, in reſpect to this rule, as well as to others, is generally correct; but Euripides cannot bear ſuch reſtraint; he often evacuates the ſtage, and leaves it empty for others in ſucceſſion.

Iphigenia

Iphigenia in Tauris, after pronouncing a ſoliloquy in the firſt ſcene, leaves the place of action, and is ſucceeded by Oreſtes and Pylades; they, after ſome converſation, walk off, and Iphigenia re-enters, accompanied with the chorus; in the *Alceſtes*, which is of the ſame author, the place of action is likewiſe void, at the end of the third act. It is true, to cover the irregularity, and to preſerve the repreſentation in motion, Euripides is extremely careful to fill the ſtage without loſs of time; but this is ſtill an interruption, and a link of the chain broken; for, during the change of the actors, there muſt be a ſpace of time, during which, the ſtage is occupied by neither ſet; it makes, indeed, a more remarkable interruption, to change the place of action, as well as the actors, but this was not practicable upon the Grecian ſtage.

It is hard to ſay, upon what model Terence has formed his plays. Having no chorus, there is a ceſſation of the repreſentation at the end of every act, but advantage is not taken of the ceſſation, even to vary the place of action; for the ſtreet is always choſen, where every thing paſſing may be ſeen by every perſon, and by that choice, the moſt ſprightly and intereſting parts of the action, which commonly paſs within doors, are excluded; as in the laſt act of the *Eunuch*, where he has ſub-

mitted to the like reſtrictions in point of time; in a word, a play with a regular chorus, is not more confined in place and time than his plays are. Thus a zealous ſectary follows implicitly antient forms and ceremonies, without once conſidering whether their introductory cauſe be ſtill ſubſiſting. Plautus, ſo far of a bolder genius than Terence, makes good uſe of the liberty afforded by an interrupted repreſentation; he varies the place of action upon all occaſions, when the relation ſuits his purpoſe.

In this ſhort analyſis of the antient drama, be it underſtood, we plead for no change of place in our plays, but after an interval; nor for any latitude, in point of time, but what falls in with an interval. The unities of place and time ought to be ſtrictly obſerved *during each act*; for, during the repreſentation, there is no opportunity for the ſmalleſt deviation from either; hence it is an *eſſential* requiſite, that during *each act*, the ſtage be always occupied, for even a momentary vacuum makes an interruption.

Another rule is not leſs eſſential; it would be a groſs breach of the unity of action, to exhibit upon the ſtage two ſeparate actions at the ſame time, and therefore, to preſerve that unity, it is neceſſary, that each perſonage introduced, during an act, be linked to thoſe

in poſſeſſion of the ſtage, ſo as to join all in one action; theſe things follow, from the very conception of an act, which admits not the ſlighteſt interruption; the moment the repreſentation is intermitted, there is an end of that act, and we have no other notion of a new act, but where, after a pauſe, or interval, the repreſentation is again put in motion. French writers, generally ſpeaking, are correct in this particular. Engliſh writers do not pay, by any means, ſo cloſe an attention. Actors not only ſucceed each other in the ſame place without connection; but what is ſtill worſe, they frequently ſucceed each other in different places. This change of place in the ſame act, ought never to be indulged; for beſide breaking the unity, it has a diſagreeable effect in marring the illuſion, which is principally held up by continuity of place.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Of ſome Inferior Rules proper to be obſerved in Tragedy.

HAVING gone through all the very eſſential parts of tragedy, we come now to ſpeak of ſome other rules, which though not ſo fundamentally conducive to its formation, yet highly neceſſary to give a poliſh to thoſe parts, as well as to produce that *ſtage effect*, which ſhould ſo much engage every dramatic poet's attention.

We have already obſerved in treating of the fable of tragedy, that it cannot be extended to more than *five acts*, if we would concur with either antient, or modern cuſtoms; the ſcenes, we have likewiſe ſaid, ſhould be *ſingle* during each act, but the exact quantity of poetical lines is undetermined, and indeed very juſtly, as ſuch a reſtraint would be fettering genius too rigidly; however, by judging from thoſe which compoſe our beſt pieces, they are generally found to run from three to four hundred.

Another rule which we have from Horace.

——*Nec quarta loqui perſona laboret*

ſhould

ſhould be almoſt univerſally attended to, as it requires but common obſervation to find out that *four* people, or more, ſpeaking on the ſtage in one group, (whether from the difficulty of a poet's ſupporting ſo many different characters in dialogue, or from an inattention in the ſpectator which this extent of converſation produces)—give not ſo much ſatisfaction, as when the dialogue is confined to *two*, or *three*; we then come to be cloſer judges of their characters, are more intereſted and more readily find out the merit, or demerit of the poet; this rule, however juſt in general, ſhould not be attended to ſo ſtrictly as *never* to depart from it. The *cataſtrophe* is very often a ſituation which admits of this infringement; as it may be neceſſary to have many things then explained by the perſons themſelves, which could not be done ſo well by another; however, even in this caſe, we would recommend this licence to be uſed ſparingly, and only where the plot is better elucidated with it than without it.

In expreſſing whatever paſſion we would chuſe to repreſent, their effects ſhould always appear in the concernment of an audience; but this can never be done where ſpeeches are turned into declamations, which tire us with their length, and inſtead of perſuading

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us to grieve for their imaginary heroes, rather repreſent them in the light of tedious viſitors, who we are in pain for till they are gone.

When the French ſtage came to be reformed by Cardinal Richlieu, thoſe long harrangues were introduced, to comply with the gravity of a church-man, and from thence it is, perhaps, we have copied this defect; but ſurely if a play, in all its parts, would give us a true picture of human nature, ſhort ſpeeches and replies, are more apt to move the paſſions than the other; it is unnatural for any one, in a guſt of paſſion, to ſpeak long together, or for another in the ſame condition, to ſuffer him without interruption; grief and paſſion, are like floods raiſed in little brooks by a ſudden rain; they are quickly up, and if the concernment be poured unexpectedly in upon us, it overflows us; but a long ſober ſhower gives them leiſure to run out as they came in, without troubling, or ſwelling the ordinary current.

But tho' all paſſions may be lively repreſented on the ſtage, if to the well writing of them the actor ſupplies a good commanding voice, and limbs gracefully diſpoſed; yet there are many things which can never be imitated to a juſt height; *dying* for inſtance, is an action which none but a

Roman

Roman Gladiator could naturally exhibit on the ſtage, when he did not imitate, but actually perform it; therefore, 'tis better to omit the repreſentation.

As a poet in the deſcription of a beautiful flower-garden, will often pleaſe our imagination more than even the place itſelf; ſo lively and affecting deſcriptions of death, ſeconded by all the pathos of acting, inſinuate a greater opinion of reality into our imaginations, than if the actor was really to die before us. When we ſee death thus repreſented, we are convinced it is but fiction; but when we hear it well related, our eyes (the ſtrongeſt witneſſes) are wanting, which might have undeceived us; and we are willing to favour the ſleight, when the poet does not too groſsly impoſe upon us. They therefore, who imagine theſe relations would make no concernment in the audience, are deceived, by confounding them with others which are antecedent to the play; the latter are often made in cold blood to the audience, but theſe are warmed with our own concernments which were before awakened in the courſe of the play.

What the philoſophers ſay of motion, that when it is once begun, it continues of itſelf, and will do ſo to eternity, without ſome ſtop put to it, is clearly true on this occaſion;

occaſion; the ſoul being already moved with the characters and fortunes of thoſe imaginary perſons, continues going, of its own accord, and we are no more weary to hear what becomes of them, when they are not on the ſtage, than we are to liſten to the news of an abſent miſtreſs. But it may be objected, that if one part of the play may be related, why not all? we anſwer, ſome parts of the action are more fit to be repreſented, ſome to be related. Corneille ſays judiciouſly, that the poet is not obliged to expoſe to view all particular actions which conduce to the principal; he ought to ſelect ſuch of them to be ſeen, which will appear with the greateſt beauty, either by the magnificence of the ſhow, the vehemence of paſſions which they produce, or ſome other charm, and let the reſt arrive to the audience by narration.

But how does our ſtage in general obſerve this decorum? Thoſe actions which ſhould be ſuppoſed to be done behind the ſcenes, are all dragged forward to the notice of the audience, and in oppoſition to that maxim of Horace,

"*Nec pueros coram populo Medea trucidet.*"

Duels, battles, and murders, transform our theatres to the ſtages of prize-fighters, and Gladiators;

Gladiators; the mode of conducting them is alſo as ridiculous as the intent; for what can be more abſurd than to repreſent an army of twenty, or thirty thouſand men, by a few awkward ſcene-ſhifters, dreſſed up in red coats, puſhed on by as many more; or a duel fought, and one of the parties ſlain with two, or three thruſts of a foil, which we know is ſo blunted as to require an hour to kill in good earneſt with? Indeed the teſtimony the audience ever bear to ſuch ſights, notwithſtanding the force of habit, prove them to be unnatural; as a *battle*, *duel*, or *death of an hero*, ſeldom, or never fail to diſſolve the ſtrongeſt theatrical illuſion, and wipe away all its ſympathetic effects with a laugh.

In ſhort, it ſhould be one general rule in a poet, that all thoſe actions, which by reaſon of their cruelty will cauſe averſion in us, or by reaſon of their impoſſibility, incredibility, &c. ſhould be either wholly avoided, or delivered by narration; and that he will be juſtified in this practice, both by the beſt of the antient, and modern writers, we ſhall ſhut up this chapter with ſome examples. In the Eunuch of Terence, Pythias, makes a relation of what had happened within at the ſoldier's entertainment; the relation likewiſe of Sejanus's death, and the prodigies before

before it, are both very remarkable; the one of which was hid from ſight to avoid the horror and tumult of the repreſentation; the other to ſhun the introduction of things impoſſible to be believed. Ben Jonſon follows Terence in his *Magnetic Lady*, where he makes one come out from dinner, to relate the quarrels, and diſorders of it, to ſave the indecent figure ſuch a view would have on the ſtage, as well as to abbreviate the ſtory. Fletcher, in his excellent play, "The King, and no King," goes yet farther, for the whole unravelling of the plot is done by narration in the fifth act, after the manner of the antients, and it has a very proper effect upon the audience, tho' it be only a relation of what was done many years before the play. Aaron Hill in his Merope, adds another inſtance to theſe, where the Revolution, which ſets the lawful heir on the throne by the murder of the tyrant at the altar, is all effected by narration, and in ſuch a manner, as gives a ſtronger impreſſion than the repreſentation of it poſſibly could. We could multiply theſe inſtances out of number, but theſe, we hope, are ſufficient to prove, that there is no error in chuſing a ſubject which requires this ſort of narrations; in the ill management of it, doubtleſs, there may.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

Of Tragic Subjects affecting us more than thoſe of Comedy.

WHOSOEVER reflects that tragedy has a much ſtronger power of affecting a great part of mankind than comedy, will eaſily conclude from hence, that their imitations are no further intereſting than in proportion to the greater, or leſſer impreſſion, which the object imitated would have made upon us. Now, it is certain, that men in general, are not ſo much moved with theatrical action during the repreſentation of a comedy as that of a tragedy; thoſe whoſe ſtudies, or amuſements, lead them to the dramatic walk, talk more frequently, and with more warmth of the tragedies than of the comedies they have ſeen repreſented; and conſequently have the former more in quotation than the latter; in ſhort, we are readier to excuſe a mediocrity in the tragic than the comic ſtile, though the latter ſeems not to have the ſame command over our attention as the firſt.

——— *Habet comœdia tanto*
Plus oneris, quanto veniæ minus. HOR.

Thoſe whoſe labours are deſigned for the ſtage, talk in the ſame ſtrain, and moſtly agree, that there is not ſo much danger in giving the public an entertainment to weep at, as to divert them with laugh ing.

One would imagine, nevertheleſs, that comedy ought to draw mens attentions more than tragedy. A comic poet does not exhibit to the ſpectators heroic characters, or ſuch as they have no knowledge of, but from ſome vague ideas formed from the relation of hiſtorians; he does not entertain the pit with conſpiracies againſt the ſtate, with oracles and other marvellous events, and ſuch as the greateſt part of the ſpectators, who have never had any ſhare in the like adventures, would not be able to tell, whether the circumſtances and conſequences thereof are ſet forth with any reſemblance of truth. On the contrary, the entertains us with the picture of our friends, and of thoſe with whom we have a conſtant intercourſe and familiarity. The theatre, according to Plato, ſubſiſts, as it were, entirely by the errors and foibles which are daily incident to men, by reaſon of their not being ſufficiently acquainted with themſelves; ſome imagining themſelves more powerful than they really

are;

are; ſome more knowing, and others, in fine, more amiable.

The tragic poet expoſes the inconveniences ariſing from the want of ſelf-knowledge in ſovereigns, and other independent perſons, the conſequences of whoſe vindictive temper make generally a great noiſe; whoſe reſentments are naturally violent, and whoſe paſſions, proper for the ſtage, are capable of being the ſprings of the greateſt events. The comic poet exhibits the conſequences of ſelf-ignorance among the general ranks of people, whoſe reſentments are ſubordinate to the laws, and whoſe paſſions, proper for the ſcenes, are productive only of domeſtic broils and ordinary adventures.

The comic poet entertains us, therefore, with the adventures of our equals, and preſents us with the portraits of originals that are conſtantly before us; he makes even the pit (allowing the expreſſion) mount upon the ſtage. Man, therefore, who is naturally fond of any diſcovery he can make of his neighbour's foibles, and deſirous of all knowledge that can entitle him to leſſen his eſteem of others, ought naturally to reſort to Thalia, rather than Melpomene, eſpecially as the former is much more fertile than the latter of leſſons for private peoples inſtructions.

Tho' comedy may not, perhaps, correct all

the failings it expoſes, yet it teaches us at leaſt, how to live with ſuch as are ſubject to thoſe failings, and how to conform ſo in company, as to avoid that roughneſs which provokes them, or that ſervility which flatters them. Tragedy, on the contrary, repreſents heroes, with whom our ſituation forbids us to attempt any reſemblance, and whoſe leſſons and examples are drawn from events ſo diſſimilar to thoſe we are commonly expoſed to, that the applications which we might be willing to make, would be extremely vague and imperfect; hence, as it is the imitation of the crimes and misfortunes of great men, ſo likewiſe it is the imitation of the ſublimeſt virtues of which they are capable.

The tragic poet exhibits men, who are captives to the moſt extravagant paſſions, and the moſt tumultuous agitations. He ſhews us a ſort of unjuſt, but all-powerful deities, who demand a young innocent princeſs to be ſacrificed at the foot of their altars; he ſets before us the progreſs of heroes, the deaths of tyrants, and the revolution of empires; 'tis true, we never find our friend in any of the tragic perſonages; but their paſſions are more impetuous, and as the laws are but a feeble barrier to theſe paſſions, they are attended with much greater conſequences than thoſe of comic characters; thus

thus the *terror* and *pity*, which the picture of tragical events excites in our ſouls, engages much more than all the laughter and contempt excited by the ſeveral incidents of comedy.

CHAP. XIV.

Of TRAGI-COMEDY.

TRAGI-COMEDY is a kind of mixed dramatic piece, partly partaking of tragedy, and partly of comedy, and is the only ſpecies of the latter, where kings and heroes are introduced. The antients knew nothing of this compoſition; their taſte was ſuperior to it; yet ſo much was this ſtyle of writing in faſhion with us, in the latter end of the laſt century, that ſcarce a tragedy ventured to make its appearance without a ſpice of comedy, or rather farce, to make the people laugh. The only excuſe we can offer for the uſe of this extraordinary dramatic entertainment, was the then political ſituation of affairs, which aſked for every thing, no matter how abſurd, to laugh away the gloom of fanaticiſm, and put down the ſtarchneſs of hypocriſy.

But, in getting rid of this gloom and moroſeneſs of manners, it happened, as it often does in ſimilar circumſtances, our anceſtors went too far in the contrary extreme; they were reſolved, at all events, to have the laugh on their ſide, and therefore, would rather encourage

courage a breach of morality, or good ſenſe on this account, than be without it; but what were the conſequences? ſome of the fineſt poets of that day fell in with this depravity, and inſtead of following the line of their own genius, which would have led them to deſpiſe this unnatural farrago, they adopted it as the moſt profitable, as well as the moſt likely to meet with public countenance. Amongſt this group, the *pathetic Otway* is *unhappily* diſtinguiſhed; that elegant painter of the human paſſions, has left behind him a tragi-comedy * on this plan, which is more a ſatire on the age he lived in, than on his own talents, as every body muſt at once ſee, that the comic part either could not be the production of the ſame pen, which animated ſo powerfully the tragic ſcenes, or, that if it was, it muſt have been *wrung* from him, in the hour of neceſſity, to pleaſe the great, and little vulgar of the day.

But to ſpeak more critically on this ſubject. One of the great requiſites both of tragedy and comedy, is *unity* of action; now, in a tragi-comedy, there are *two* diſtinct actions carrying on together, to the perplexity of the audience, who, before they are well engaged in the concernments of one part, are diverted

* Venice Preſerv'd.

diverted to another, and by thoſe means, eſpouſe the intereſt of neither: from hence likewiſe ariſes another inconvenience equally as abſurd, which is, that one half of the characters of the play are not known to each other; they keep their diſtances like the *Mountagues* and *Capulets*, and ſeldom begin an acquaintance till the laſt ſcene of the fifth act, when they all meet upon the ſtage to wind up their own ſtories.

In ſhort, the very baſis of this ſpecies of the drama, is egregiouſly unnatural; for, as Ariſtotle has juſtly laid down *compaſſion* to be one of the great ſprings of tragedy, how incompatible is *mirth*, or, more commonly *low humour*, with ſo refined and exalted a ſenſation? and, is it not evident, that the poet muſt deſtroy the former, by mixing it with the latter? He that would attempt to make us *laugh* and *cry*, in common converſation, we ſhould juſtly hold a *ridiculous* character, for endeavouring at contrary emotions, which the heart can never feel at the ſame time, every thing that diſpoſes it for the one, indiſpoſing it for the other.

We are happy, however, in treating of this ſubject, that we are now but ſpeaking of its *manes*; tragi-comedy having left this country (where, we are afraid, it was originally

ginally hatched) above half a century ago; for declining, as the preſent ſtate of the ſtage is; our taſte has, as *yet*, purity enough to reject this ſeduction with univerſal contempt; and we hope, for the credit of poſterity, no ſucceeding age will relapſe into a ſpecies of the drama, at once ſo repugnant to all the laws of art as well as nature.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

Of the Origin, and Progreſs of ANTIENT COMEDY.

THE origin of comedy is as obſcure as that of tragedy; they had both their original, from the feſtivals of the Vintage, and were not diſtinguiſhed from one another, but by a burleſque, or ſerious chorus. But if we give theſe words a ſtricter ſenſe, according to the notion which has been ſince formed, comedy was produced after tragedy, and was, in many reſpects, a ſequel, and imitation of the works of Eſchylus; it is in reality nothing more than an action ſet before the ſight, by the ſame artifice of repreſentation, materially differing in nothing but the object, which is *ridicule*.

Ariſtotle informs us, that Homer wrote a comic epic poem, called *Margites*, which, to the no ſmall detriment of ſucceeding ages, is loſt; to this poem he ſuppoſes comedy owes its birth, as does tragedy from the Iliad of the ſame author. Thus the deſign, and artifice of comedy were drawn from Homer, and Eſchylus. This will appear leſs ſurpriſing, ſince our ideas are always gradual, and arts are ſeldom invented but by progreſſive

but

imitation; the firſt idea contains the ſeed of the ſecond, the ſecond expanding itſelf gives birth to a third, and ſo on. Such is the progreſs of the human mind! it proceeds in its productions, ſtep by ſtep, in the ſame manner as nature multiplies her works, by repetitions only of her own acts, when ſhe ſeems moſt to run into variety.

Who was the happy author of that imitation, however, is a queſtion of more doubt; whether only one like Eſchylus of tragedy, or whether there were ſeveral? Horace only quotes three writers, who had reputation in the old comedy; Eupolis, Cratinus, and Ariſtophanes; of whom, he ſays, "That they, and others, who wrote in the ſame way, reprehended the faults of particular perſons with exceſſive liberty." Theſe are probably the poets of the greateſt reputation, though they were not the firſt, and we know the names of many others.

Amongſt theſe three, we may be ſure that Ariſtophanes had the greateſt character, not only on account of the number of eulogiums beſtowed on him, both by his own countrymen and others, but likewiſe, becauſe he is the only writer of whom any comedies have made their way down to us through the confuſion of times; there are not indeed any proofs that he was the inventor of

comedy,

comedy, but there are that he had contributed, more than any other, to bring comedy to the perfection in which he left it. We ſhall therefore not enquire further, whether regular comedy was the work of a ſingle mind, which ſeems yet to be unſettled, or of ſeveral cotemporaries, ſuch as theſe which Horace quotes? but diſtinguiſh the *three forms* which comedy wore in her progreſs towards perfection.

That comedy which Horace calls the antient, and which according to his account, was after Eſchylus, retained ſomething of its original ſtate, and of the licentiouſneſs which it practiſed, whilſt it was yet without regularity, and uttered looſe jokes and abuſe upon the paſſers by from the cart of Theſpis. Though it was now properly modelled, as might have been worthy of a great theatre, and a numerous audience, and deſerved the name of a regular comedy, it was not yet much nearer to decency; it was a repreſentation of real actions, and exhibited the dreſs, the motions, and the air (as far as could be done in a maſk) of any one who was thought proper to be ſacrificed to public ſcorn.

In a city ſo free (or to come nearer the truth ſo *licentious*) as Athens was at that time, and in this particular, no body was

ſpared;

ſpared; not even the chief magiſtrate's, nor the very judges by whoſe voice comedians were allowed, or prohibited; the inſolence of theſe performances reached at laſt to open impiety, and ſport was made equally with men and gods. Theſe are the features by which the greateſt part of the compoſitions of Ariſtophanes will be known, which, however remarkable for conveying to us the wit, and humour of that day, will at the ſame time be chargeable with the abandoned infamy of ſacrificing one of the greateſt, and wiſeſt men * not only of Greece, but of any age, or nation whatever.

This licentiouſneſs of the poets was however at laſt reſtrained by a law, which gave birth to what is called the *middle comedy*; for the government, which was before ſhared by all the inhabitants, being now confined to a ſettled number of citizens, it was ordered, that no man's name ſhould be mentioned on the ſtage: but poetical malignity was not long in finding the ſecret of defeating the purpoſe of this law, and of making itſelf ample compenſation for the reſtraint, by inventing falſe names. The poets ſet themſelves, therefore, to work upon known and real characters, ſo that now they had

* Socrates.

had the advantage of giving a more exquiſite gratification to their vanity, and the malice of ſpectators. One had the refined pleaſure of ſetting others to gueſs, and the other that of gueſſing right, by naming the masks. When pictures are ſo like the originals, that the names are not wanted, no body inſcribes them. The conſequence of this law, therefore, was nothing more than to make that done with delicacy, which before was done groſſly; and the art, which was expected, would be confined within the limits of duty, was ſtill tranſgreſſed, but with more ingenuity.

The new comedy, or that which followed, was a refinement which gave the laſt poliſh to this art; for the magiſtrates, who as they, before, forbade the uſe of real names, now forbade real ſubjects, and the train of choruſſes too much given to abuſe; ſo that the poets ſaw themſelves reduced to the neceſſity of bringing imaginary names, and ſubjects upon the ſtage, which at once purified and enriched the theatre. Hence comedy from that time, was no longer a fury armed with torches and firebrands, denouncing perſonalities, and partial invectives, but a pleaſing, innocent, and inſtructive mirror of human life.

To the poliſhed genius of Menander, the Greeks principally were indebted for this refine-

refinement; and tho' none of his works have come down to the preſent day, it is to him, Plautus and Terence, and from them us moderns, are indebted for the ſtandard of comic writing; ſurely we are authoriſed to ſay ſo, on the beſt grounds, when Cæſar only called Terence, whoſe works ſufficiently proclaim him an equal maſter of the elegant, and humorous, "*one half of Menander*;" indeed all the poets both of his own country, and of the Latins, conſpire in giving him the higheſt eulogiums; but as Plutarch has drawn the compariſon more cloſely between him and Ariſtophanes, (the only competitor he had) we ſhall make no apology for giving it in this place.

"He objects to Ariſtophanes, that he carries all his thoughts beyond nature, that he writes rather to the crowd, than to men of character, that he affects a ſtile obſcure, and licentious, tragical, pompous, and mean, ſometimes ſerious, and ſometimes ludicrous, that he makes none of his perſonages ſpeak according to any diſtinct character, ſo that in his ſcenes, the ſon cannot be known from the father, the citizen from the boor, the hero from the ſhop-keeper, and the divine from the ſerving man; whereas the diction of Menander, which is always uniform and pure, is very juſtly adapted

ed to different characters, riſing when it is neceſſary to vigorous, and ſprightly comedy, yet without tranſgreſſing the proper limits, or loſing ſight of nature, in which he has attained to a perfection which no other writer before him arrived; for what man, beſides himſelf, ever found out the art of making a diction equally ſuitable to women, and children, old, and young, divinities, and heroes, which like a current of clear water running through banks differently turned, complies with its courſe without changing any thing of its nature, or purity?"

To omit nothing eſſential, which concerns this part, we ſhall extend the view of antient comedy a little further, by giving a ſhort account of its progreſs amongſt the Romans. When the arts paſſed from Greece to Rome, comedy took its turn amongſt the reſt, but the Romans applied themſelves only to the new ſpecies without chorus, or perſonal abuſe; though, perhaps, they might have played ſome tranſlations of the old, or middle comedy; as Pliny gives an account of one which was repreſented in his time. The Roman comedy, which was modelled upon the laſt ſpecies of the Greek, hath nevertheleſs its different ages, according as its authors were rough, or poliſhed; the pieces of Livius Andronicus

Andronicus * more antient, and leſs refined than thoſe of the writers who learned the art from him, may be ſaid to compoſe the firſt age; to him we muſt join Nevius his cotemporary, and Ennius, who lived ſome years after him. The ſecond age, compriſes Pacuvius, Cecilius, and Accius. The third and higheſt age of its perfection, and which may properly be called the new comedy, claims Plautus, and Terence, of the laſt of whom it is univerſally agreed, he was the faithful copier of Menander.

But the Romans without troubling themſelves with this order of ſucceſſion, diſtinguiſhed their comedies by the dreſſes of the players. The Robe called *Prætexta*, with large borders of purple, being the formal dreſs of magiſtrates in their dignity; the actors, who had this dreſs, gave its name to the comedy: the ſecond ſpecies, introduced the ſenators not in great offices, but as private men; this was called *Toges* from *Togata*: the laſt ſpecies, was named *Tabernaria* from the *Tunic*, or common dreſs of the people, or rather from the mean houſes which were painted on the ſcene. To ſay the truth, theſe are but trifling diſtinctions, as comedy may be more uſefully, and judiciouſly diſtinguiſhed by the general nature of its ſubjects. As

* The year of Rome 514.

to the Romans, whether they had, or had not reaſon for theſe names, they have left us ſo little upon the ſubject which is come down to us, that we need not trouble ourſelves with a diſtinction which affords us no ſolid ſatisfaction. Plautus, and Terence, are the only authors of whom we are in poſſeſſion, and as they give us a fuller notion of the real nature of their comedy, we muſt refer for further particulars to their works at large, concluding this chapter on antient comedy, with a ſhort character of theſe poets as drawn by father Rapin.

" With reſpect to the two Latin comic poets, Plautus is ingenious in his deſigns, happy in his conceptions, and fruitful of invention; he has, however, according to Horace, ſome low jocularities, and theſe ſmart ſayings which made the vulgar laugh, made him be pitied by men of higher taſte; it is true, ſome of his jeſts are extremely good, but others likewiſe are very bad; to this every man's expoſed, who is too much determined to make ſallies of merriment, who endeavours to raiſe that laughter by hyperboles, which would not ariſe by a juſt repreſentation of things. Plautus is not quite ſo regular as Terence in the ſcheme of his deſigns, or in the diſtribution of his acts, but he is more ſimple in his plots; for the fables of Terence are commonly

ly complex, as may be ſeen in his Andrea, which contains two amours. It was imputed as a fault to Terence, that to bring more action upon the ſtage, he made one Latin comedy out of two Greek, but then Terence unravels his plot more naturally than Plautus, which Plautus did more naturally than Ariſtophanes; and though Cæſar calls Terence but "one half of Menander," becauſe, though he had ſoftneſs, and delicacy, there was in him ſome want of ſprightlineſs and ſtrength; yet he has written in a manner, ſo natural, and ſo judicious, that though he was then only a copy, he is now an original."

CHAP. XVI.

Of the Laws of COMEDY.

COMEDY, according to Ariſtotle, is defined to be "an imitation of the worſt men; when I ſay *worſt* (ſays that great philoſopher) I don't mean in all ſorts of vices, but *only* in *ridicule*, which is properly a deformity without pain, and which never contributes to the deſtruction of the ſubject in which it is." This definition of Ariſtotle's is corroborated by Horace, Quintilian, Boileau, Mulgrave, and the long line of illuſtrious authors, who have ever written on this ſubject; its *manners*, *ſentiments*, and *diction*, are governed by the ſame laws as thoſe of tragedy, that is, the firſt ſhould be *good*, or ſuitable to the characters, and the two laſt correſpondent to the firſt. In the choice of ſubjects, and where theſe ſcenes are to be placed, however, there is a material difference between thoſe of tragedy and comedy. In the firſt, we have already pointed out who are in general the proper heroes, as well as that tragic poets ſhould place their ſcenes in times remote from thoſe we live in; reaſons of an oppoſite nature,

demand that the ſcenes of comedy ought to be fixt in the very places, and times, in which they are repreſented.

Comedy has no occaſion to raiſe its favourite perſonages on pedeſtals; ſince its principal end is not to make us admire them, in order to render them more eaſily the objects of pity; the moſt it aims at, is to give us a little uneaſineſs for them, ariſing from the croſſes they meet with (which ought rather to be a ſort of diſappointment than real misfortune) in order to give us more ſatisfaction at ſeeing them happy at the unravelling of the piece; its deſign being to make us laugh at the expence of ridiculous perſons, purging us of thoſe faults which it expoſes, that we may become fitter for ſociety. Comedy therefore, cannot render the ridiculouſneſs of its perſonages too viſible to the ſpectators, who, whilſt they diſcover with eaſe, the ridicule of others, will ſtill find it difficult enough to diſcern that which is within themſelves.

Now, we cannot diſtinguiſh nature ſo eaſily when ſhe appears in ſtrange cuſtoms, manners, and apparel, as when ſhe is clad after our own faſhion; the Spaniſh, Italian, and French decorum, for inſtance, being not ſo well known to us as that of England, we are not ſo much ſhocked with the ridicule of a

perſon that acts againſt them, as we ſhould, were this perſonage to violate the laws of decency eſtabliſhed here.

We always diſtinguiſh human nature in the heroes of tragedies, whether their ſcenes be at Rome, or at Sparta, becauſe tragedy is univerſally deſcriptive of great virtues, and vices; men of all countries, and ages, reſembling one another more in thoſe than they do in ordinary practices and cuſtoms; in ſhort, than in thoſe vices, and virtues, whoſe pictures are drawn in comedy: hence the perſonages of the latter, ought to be ſhaped after the faſhion of that country for which they were written.

It may be objected, that Plautus, and Terence, have placed the ſcenes of the greateſt part of their pieces in a *ſtrange country*, with reſpect to the Romans, for whom they had compoſed their comedies; the plot of their pieces ſuppoſing the laws, and cuſtoms, of the Greeks. But if this reaſon ſuffices for an objection, it is not, however, ſtrong enough, to evince the contrary of what we have eſtabliſhed; beſides, in anſwer to it, we may venture to ſay, that Plautus, and Terence, might have been miſtaken. When they firſt wrote, comedy was then in its infancy at Rome, whilſt the Greeks had already

ready furniſhed the ſtage with moſt excellent pieces; theſe ingenious Romans then, who had no patterns in their own language to direct them, fell into an imitation of the comedies of Menander, and other Greek poets, and thus acted Greek perſonages before Roman ſpectators.

This practice is too generally the caſe upon the tranſplantation of any art; the firſt *importers* of it (if we may be allowed ſo familiar an expreſſion) too ſtrongly conform to the foreign practice, and are guilty of a miſtake, in imitating at home the ſame originals, which that art was accuſtomed to mimic where they firſt learned it; but experience ſoon teaches them to change the object of imitation; hence it was, not long before the Roman poets found out that their comedies would be much more agreeable, were the ſcenes to be transferred to Rome, and the characters of that very people to be acted, who were to judge of their performances. This was done accordingly, and the comedy compoſed after the Roman manners, was divided into ſeveral ſpecies.

Horace, therefore, applauds ſuch of his countrymen as firſt introduced Roman perſonages into their comedies, and thus delivered the ſtage from a kind of tyranny exerciſed over it by foreign perſonages;

Nil intentatum noſtri liquere poetæ,
Nec minimum meruere decus, veſtigia Græca
Auſi deſerere, et celebrare domeſtica facta,
Vel qui prætextas, vel qui docuere togatas.

HOR. de art. poet.

There are other general rules of comedy, which as they are very judiciouſly laid down in Rapin's 25th reflection on poetry, we think we can do nothing better on this occaſion than tranſcribe them:

" Comedy, (ſays he) is a repreſentation of common life; its end is to ſhew the faults of particular characters on the ſtage, to correct the diſorder of the people by the fear of ridicule: thus ridicule is its eſſential part, and may conſiſt in words, or things, decent, or groteſque. To find what is ridiculous in every thing is the gift merely of nature, for all the actions of life have their bright, and dark ſides, ſomething ſerious, and ſomething merry. Ariſtotle, who has given rules for drawing tears, has given none for raiſing laughter; this is principally the work of nature, and muſt proceed from genius, with very little help from art, or matter. The Spaniards have a turn to find the ridicule in things, much more than the French, and the Italians, who are much better comedians, excel in expreſſing

expreſſing it; in ſhort, that agreeable turn, that gaiety which maintains the delicacy of its character without falling into dullneſs, or buffoonery; that elegant raillery which is the flower of fine wit, is the qualification which comedy requires.

" We muſt, however, remember, that the artificial ridicule, which is required on the theatre, muſt be only a tranſcript of the ridicule which nature affords. Comedy is only naturally written, when being on the theatre, a man can fancy himſelf in a private family, or a particular part of the town, and meets with nothing, but what he really meets with in the world; for it is a mocking of this art, in which a man does not ſee his own picture, his own manners, and thoſe of the people amongſt whom he lives: Menander ſucceeded only by this art amongſt the Greeks, and the Romans when they ſat at Terence's comedies, imagined themſelves in a private party, finding nothing there, which they had not been accuſtomed to find in their uſual converſations.

" The great art of comedy is to adhere to nature; to have general ſentiments, and expreſſions, which all the world can underſtand; the author always keeping it in his mind, that the coarſeſt touches after nature, will

will pleaſe more than the moſt delicate, where ſhe is inconſiſtent: low, and mean words, notwithſtanding, ſhould never be allowed on the ſtage, if they are not ſupported by ſome kind of wit; proverbs, and vulgar ſmartneſſes, ſhould be likewiſe precluded, unleſs they have ſomething in them of nature, and pleaſantry.

" It is by an application to the ſtudy of nature alone that we arrive at probability, which is the only infallible guide to theatrical ſucceſs; without this probability every thing is defective, and that which has it is beautiful; he that follows this can never do wrong, and the moſt common faults of comedy proceed from the neglect of propriety, and the precipitation of incidents. Care muſt likewiſe be taken, that the hints made uſe of to introduce the incidents are not too ſtrong, that the ſpectator may enjoy the pleaſure of finding out their meaning; but commonly the weak place in comedy is, the untying of the plot, on account of the difficulty which there is in diſentangling what has been perplexed. To perplex an intrigue is eaſy; the imagination does it by itſelf, but it muſt be diſentangled merely by the judgement, and is therefore ſeldom done happily, which he that reflects never ſo little on the

general

general cataſtrophe of comedies will readily perceive."

It remains however, to be examined, whether comedy will allow pictures larger than the life, that the ſtrength of the ſtrokes may make a deeper impreſſion upon the minds of the ſpectators; that is, if a poet may make a covetous man rather more covetous, or a peeviſh man more impertinent, and troubleſome than he really is. To which we anſwer; this was the practice of Plautus, whoſe aim was to pleaſe the people at large; Terence however, thought otherwiſe, and confined himſelf to repreſent virtue, and vice, without the leaſt addition, or aggravation. The critics are ſomewhat divided in this choice; however, if we may venture to give an opinion on ſo balanced a ſubject, we muſt declare for Plautus, conſidering comedy in this reſpect, like pieces of perſpective which require ſtrokes ſomewhat ſtronger than nature, that they may be the better diſcerned as well as felt, at a diſtance.

After all we have ſaid of the rules of tragedy and comedy, it may not be improper to add one general remark, which is this; that tho' we think all perſons who turn their abilities towards writing for the ſtage, ſhould be previouſly acquainted with rules; they never can, ſimply of themſelves, conſtitute a good tragic, or comic writer.

In

In all liberal profeſſions, much fundamental, and analytical knowledge is neceſſary; but, without genius in the exerciſe of this knowledge, the mere profeſſor may be as exact, and regular, as a time-piece, but equally dull and uninſtructive.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

Of SENTIMENTAL COMEDY.

THO' the laws of the drama know no ſpecies of comedy under this title, yet as the prevalence of cuſtom has not only of late admitted it, but given it a firſt rate place on our theatres, it very properly becomes an object of enquiry in this work.

Were we to reaſon by analogy, we ſhould never be able to find out the cauſe of ſo unclaſſical a ſuperſeſſion, for whoever will make the compariſon between that comedy left us by antiquity, and ſo ably continued to us by ſeveral of our Engliſh poets with this, will find the features too diſſimilar to claim the moſt diſtant reference; in the former, we have a fable founded on the laws of probability, and nature; characters ſpeaking the language of their conformation, and the whole ſtage reflecting the manners of the world; in the latter, names inſtead of characters, poetical egotiſms for manners, bombaſt for ſentiment, and inſtead of wit and humour, (the very eſſence of comedy) a driveling ſpecies of morality, which as a term generally applied to ethics, may properly enough

enough be called *good*, but from being falſely applied to comedy (however it may excite the *piety* of the crowd) muſt nauſeate men of ſenſe, and education.

There is a circumſtance which we think has been a leading aſſiſtant in the eſtabliſhment of this falſe taſte. Without meaning to turn reformers, and inconſiderately fall in with the vulgar opinion of generally condemning the preſent age, merely becauſe it is the preſent age; thus much we think we are warranted to aſſert; that the preſent age, however it may be free from great, and leading vices, is peculiarly marked by a *ſlaviſh effeminacy of manners*, and *univerſality of indolent diſſipation*, unknown to former ages; hence the people of faſhion, unwilling to ſee ſuch juſt emblems of themſelves on the ſtage as comedy *ſhould* repreſent, thought it better to aſſume a virtue which they had not, by crying up the *theory* of morality as a kind of cover for the *breach* of it. The lower kinds of people having no other models in their eye, than thoſe whom they often miſtakenly call their *betters*, without weighing this opinion, followed their example; ſo that between the two parties nature began to be called vulgar, and every thing partaking of the low, humorous, or vicious, (principal ingredients in comedy) began to be under-

der-rated, becauſe the former had an intereſt in decrying them, and the latter permitted themſelves to be duped by the artifice.

It is the voice of the public forms the public taſte. Comedy, which is above all walks of writing, perhaps the moſt difficult, and unattainable, and which according to one of the moſt diſtinguiſhed characters of the laſt age, "—is the *firſt* pretence" To *judgement*, *breeding*, *wit*, and *eloquence*. Being thus vitiated; there were not wanting poets, who, departing from the honourable line of their profeſſion, (or to ſpeak more correctly, unacquainted with the principles of their profeſſion) preſcribed to this innovation. Sir Richard Steel's *Conſcious Lovers*, we believe, was the firſt in this line of writing; not that we would claſs this, in other reſpects, elegant and judicious writer with the general run of poets who have ſince ſucceeded him in this line; we only mean to ſay, that the pathetic ſcenes of this comedy, made the firſt departure, of any conſequence, from that ſterling kind of writing left us by antiquity; and conſequently, the general reputation of *Sir Richard Steel*, who was at that time much above par as a moral writer, firſt gave it the ſtamp of faſhion.

Comedy being thus debauched, like an unhappy female, began to be viewed in the light

light of *common game*, by thoſe poets who dare not look up to her in the days of her chaſtity; ſuch finding the intercourſe eaſy, and the profits great, immediately hired themſelves in her ſervice. The ſucceſs of one fool drew many; they had nothing to do but exchange the *vis comica* for the pathetic, and ſubſtitute tame individual recital for natural dialogue; in ſhort, a novel furniſhed them with the plot; a ſervile alluſion to all the little chat of the times, for wit, and humour; and the Whole Duty of Man, Pamela, or the Oeconomy of Human Life, for ſentiments. Thus an art originally invented to laſh the follies, and imperfections of mankind, through the vehicle of ridicule; an art which ſhould ever be conſidered as the greateſt teſt of wit, breeding, and obſervation; an art, "whoſe end both at the firſt, and now was, and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to ſhew virtue her own features, ſcorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and preſſure," is changed into what is vulgarly called a moral kind of entertainment, where a citizen, 'tis true, may bring his wife, and daughter to, with as much *ſafety* as to a Methodiſt chapel, but with equal proſpect of improvement.

But

But as we mean to treat this ſubject otherwiſe than either inveſtigating its origin, or ſimply declaiming on its imperfections; it will be but candid to weigh the force of the arguments, which are urged by the favourers of this innovated art.

The firſt and moſt flattering to the paſſions of the public is, that vicious, or ridiculous characters, tho' ſentimental writers are *piouſly* afraid ſuch do *ſometimes* exiſt in nature, yet it would ill become the dignity of their pens to exhibit them on the ſtage, leaſt they might become objects of imitation; hence they are for the moſt part excluded their pieces, or if at times admitted, but feebly ſketched in the back ground, whilſt the principal figures are tricked out in all the brilliancy of virtue, without the leaſt ſhade of mortality. To paſs by the great defect of this practice, as it reſpects the laws of comedy; let us take it up on their own ground, and ſee how it is fitted to ſucceed in the *reformation of manners*.

The ſoundeſt philoſophers have agreed, that ridicule has a much better effect in curing the vices, and imperfections of men, than the examples of rigid virtue, whoſe duties are ſo ſublimed, that they for the moſt part intimidate them from the trial. Were mankind made of that moral pliability of mind, ſo as to be capable of receiving the ſharpeſt im-

preſſions of virtue, then indeed ſome excuſe might ſtand for the latter practice; but as their hearts are compoſed of as many degrees of imperfection, as there are degrees in ſociety—what will beſt, and moſt effectually reform them, ſhould be adopted; hence no characters ſhould be introduced on the ſtage by any means whatever, above the tone of mortality, whilſt the *liar*, *rake*, *fop*, *ſharper*, *hypocrite*, *glutton*, &c. &c. ſhould be always brought forward in the warmeſt colourings of ridicule. Similar characters in life, finding themſelves thus conſtantly expoſed on the ſtage, would indirectly feel the *ſhame* of their ſituations, and either abandon them entirely, or be taught to qualify them ſo as to be leſs inimical to ſociety; whereas at preſent, by being for the moſt part, precluded as objects of *ridicule*, and *contempt*, the world loſes the benefit of their reformation.

Another argument urged for our ſentimental dramatiſts is, that as 'tis the world gives reputation and credit to works of art and ſcience; it at preſent, reliſhing no other ſpecies of comedy but the *ſentimental*, they are not to be blamed for writing up to that ſtandard. But this is ever the excuſe of *little minds*, who under a ſhew of complying with the world, cover their own ignorance, and unfitneſs, to ſtand candidates for fame, and immor-

immortality; as there is nothing more certain, than that a *real genius*, in whatever kind, can never, without the greateſt unwillingneſs, and ſhame, be induced to act below his character, and for *mere intereſt* be prevailed on to proſtitute his knowledge, by performing contrary to certain rules.

Whoever has heard any thing of the lives of famous ſtatuaries, architects, or painters, will call to mind many inſtances of this nature? Or whoever has made any acquaintance with the better ſort of *mechanics*, ſuch as are real lovers of their art, and maſters in it, muſt have obſerved their natural fidelity in this reſpect? be they never ſo idle, diſſolute, or debauched; how regardleſs ſoever of other rules, they abhor any tranſgreſſion in their art, and would chuſe to loſe cuſtomers and ſtarve, rather than by a baſe compliance with the world, act contrary to what they call the juſtneſs, and truth of work *.

This is virtue! real virtue, and love of truth, independent of opinion, and above the world; this diſpoſition transferred to the whole of life, perfects a character, and gives it that finiſh which extorts even the admiration of thoſe who cannot practiſe it.

Had the early poets of *Greece* thus complimented the *world* by complying with its

* Lord Shafteſbury's characteriſtics.

falſe reliſh, and unſettled appetites, they had not done their countrymen ſuch ſervice, nor themſelves ſuch honour; thoſe generous ſpirits ſcorning to ſuit themſelves to the world, manfully drew it after them; they forced their way into it, and by weight of merit turned its judgement on their ſide; they formed their audience, refined the public ear, and poliſhed the age, that in return they may be rightly and laſtingly applauded: they were not diſappointed, applauſe ſoon came, and was laſting, for it was found; they have juſtice done them at this day, they have ſurvived their nation, and live in all languages; the more each age is enlightened, the more they ſhine, and their fame muſt neceſſarily laſt as long as letters, and judgement exiſt.

Many of our ſentimental dramatic authors, 'tis true, may pique themſelves on their ſuperior ſituations in life to ſeveral of thoſe of antiquity, and jocularly conſign immortality to ſuch who are now no longer able to enjoy it; not conſidering, becauſe *not feeling*, that *this hope of immortality* was then as much their reward, as their labours have ſince been the benefit of poſterity. They may run the compariſon ſtill further, by proving (as well by the receipts of the theatres, as by thoſe of

of their bookſellers) how much more exact they are in proportioning the *quality*, and *quantity*, of the public demand, and with what greater dexterity, and cunning, they pander to the taſte of an audience: but ſuch are to know, that ſucceſs is by no means the criterion of deſert; that however, they may, for a while, triumph in the abſence of truth, and nature, the period is haſtening (if the proverb is true, that things at the *worſt* muſt neceſſarily mend) when this ſpell of *ſentimental enchantment* muſt be diſſolved, and when real comedy ſhall once more unfurl her ſtandard of reaſon on the theatre.

The public at large have ſometimes their falſe appetites, and unnatural cravings like individuals, which, ſuch is the ſituation of human affairs, time, or accident alone, muſt eradicate. The Fanatics under Cromwell, with all the parade of hypocriſy on one ſide, and the vindictive ſpirit of revenge on the other, chriſtened their conduct *religion*; and not only the dregs of the people hailed it by this name, but the guardians of the ſtate echoed it back on the public; yet but a few years, a very few years elapſed, when this ridiculous ſcene had its final cloſe, reaſon once more re-aſſumed her throne;

and he that had no other pretenſions to chriſtianity than the *ſtarchneſs of his band*, or the talent of *ſpeaking though his noſe*, was juſtly reprobated as a cheat, or a driveller.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

That the Characters of COMEDY *are far from being as yet exhauſted.*

ANOTHER argument urged by the writers of *ſentimental* comedy, as an excuſe for their want of genius is, that moſt, if not all, the comic ſubjects are already exhauſted. They will allow that tragic poets can never want ſubjects, becauſe they can introduce perſonages into any action in whatever ſort of character they pleaſe, and can embelliſh alſo the fable with extraordinary incidents, invented juſt as their fancy ſuggeſts; but a comic poet, ſay they, muſt exhibit portraits in which we can diſcover thoſe with whom we live, and converſe; conſequently Shakeſpeare, Moliere, &c. and their ſucceſſors, have been before-hand with us in ſeizing all the real characters in nature.

In anſwer to this objection, we may venture to affirm, that Shakeſpeare, Moliere, &c. and their imitators, have ſtill left for the ſtage characters in abundance for forming the ſubjects of comedy. The caſe is pretty

nearly the ſame with reſpect to men's minds, and characters, as with their countenances; man's face is compoſed of the ſame parts, of two eyes, one mouth, &c. and yet men's countenances are all different, becauſe they are differently compoſed; now the characters of men are not only differently compoſed, but beſides they are not always the ſame parts, that is, the ſame vices, the ſame virtues, and the ſame projects, that enter into the compoſition of their character; wherefore, the characters of men ought to have a much greater difference, and variety, than even men's faces.

The word character implies a compoſition of ſeveral failings and virtues; in this mixture, ſome particular vice predominates, if the character be vicious; and ſome virtue or other prevails, if the character be virtuous; thus the different characters of men are ſo diverſified by this mixture of vices, virtues, and natural parts differently combined, that two characters perfectly alike, are a much greater phænomenon in nature than two faces of a complete reſemblance.

Every well drawn character makes a good perſonage in comedy, and every ſuch character can act with ſucceſs a part, more or leſs long, more or leſs important—why ſhould love be a privileged paſſion and the only one

that

that can furniſh a variety of characters, by means of the diverſity, which age, ſex, and profeſſion, cauſe in the ſentiments of lovers? Cannot the character of a miſer be likewiſe varied by age, by paſſions, as alſo by profeſſion? theſe characters if well drawn, would never be tireſome, becauſe they exiſt in nature, and a plain and ingenuous deſcription of her, is always agreeable. If therefore, any of our modern comic writers complain of their being unable to bring new characters upon the ſtage, it muſt proceed from their not being clear ſighted enough to read into nature, to unravel diſtinctly the different principles of the ſame actions, and to ſee how the ſame principles operate differently upon every individual.

To have a diſtinct and juſt idea of what can form a character, requires a capacity of diſcerning three, or four touches, that belong to a man's peculiar temper, amongſt twenty, or thirty things which he ſays, or does in common with the reſt of mankind; one muſt likewiſe collect theſe touches, and purſuing the ſtudy of the model, extract, as it were from his actions, and diſcourſes, ſuch ſtrokes as are propereſt for conveying a knowledge of the portrait.

Theſe are the ſtrokes which ſeparated from ſuch indifferent things, as all men ſay, and do pretty near alike, and afterwards collected together, conſtitute what we call a *character*, and give it its theatrical finiſh: all men appear alike to limited capacities; to perſons of a better underſtanding they all ſeem different. Thus every man is an original to a poet bleſt with a truly comic, and diſtinguiſhing genius.

The portraits of ordinary painters are generally placed in one attitude, and have nearly the ſame air, becauſe ſuch painters are not knowing enough in their art to diſcern the individual difference, which diſcriminates each particular portrait; but an able artiſt knows how to give every one the certain air, and attitude, that belongs to him, by virtue of his conformation; for poſſeſſing the talent of diſcerning people's natural temper, and diſpoſition, which are always different, the countenance, and action, therefore, of the perſons he draws, are conſtantly varied.

Experience likewiſe helps us very much to find out the real difference between objects, which, at firſt ſight, appear the ſame. Thoſe who look at negroes, for inſtance, the firſt time, imagine their countenances are all alike, but by ſeeing them often they diſcover as great a variety in their faces as in thoſe of Europeans;

Europeans; and hence, Moliere found out more originals in the world when he came to the age of fifty, than when he was but forty; becauſe he had looked longer, and more intenſely, on the different features of mankind.

The generality of the world, are only capable of diſcovering a character, when it has received its due form, and has been theatrically finiſhed; but there are none, except ſuch as are poſſeſſed with a genius for comedy, that are capable of diſcerning this character as long as the particular ſtrokes which are neceſſary for diſcerning it, remain blended and confuſed in an infinite variety of diſcourſes, and actions, which decency, mode, cuſtom, profeſſion, and intereſt, ſet all men upon ſaying, and doing, pretty near with the ſame air; 'tis they alone can inform us what character would reſult from thoſe ſtrokes were they to be detached, and afterwards contracted in one body. In fine, to diſcern the difference of characters in nature, being properly the work of invention, a man that is born without a comic genius properly improved, is as incapable of diſtinguiſhing thoſe characters, as a perſon without a genius for painting, is unable to diſcern which are the moſt proper objects in nature for the exerciſe of his profeſſion.—" How

many

many things (ſays Cicero) do painters obſerve in a particular incident of light, that are imperceptible to our eyes."

We conclude, therefore, that a poet, whom a diſpoſition of genius, and not a *mercenerary view of ſubſiſtence*, has called to the art, will always be able to diſcover new ſubjects in nature; his predeceſſors (if we may be allowed the figurative expreſſion) having left him perhaps as much marble in the quarry as they themſelves have diſinterred.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

Whether Tragedy, or Comedy, be the more difficult to write?

WAS this queſtion to be decided by the general ſucceſs of either, the former undoubtedly would claim the preference. Comedy being a picture of living manners, moſt people think themſelves qualified to like, or diſlike; whilſt tragedy marking the characters of perſons much above this level, buſied in the conduct of great events, unfamiliar to the walks of middle life, deters the *many* from attempting to judge even of its errors (except indeed, they are very glaring) whilſt its beauties are always ſure to captivate, and ſurpriſe; thus tragedy has a kind of artificial advantage over comedy. But as 'twould be as unfair to reſt upon ſuch a deciſion, as it would be to aſcribe wiſdom to a judge, merely becauſe he is dreſſed differently from other men, we ſhall take a more impartial view of this queſtion, by conſidering, and contraſting, its reſpective difficulties.

Though

Though the general outlines of tragedy are limited, its characters are without number; as diſſimulation, jealouſy, policy, ambition, and other intereſts, and paſſions which take a thouſand different forms in different ſituations of hiſtory. Thus the ambitious, blood-thirſty Richard III. ſo happily painted by Shakeſpeare, did not ſtand in the way of the ſame poet when he drew his Macbeth; a ſmall alteration of character diſcriminated them ſo as to make them equally ſtriking, new and diſtinct; for tho' they are both poſſeſſed of ambition, and both waded through blood to their ſeveral crowns, yet by giving the former a natural diſpoſition for cruelty, and the other an artificial one, moſtly made up by the ſolicitations of his wife, the incidents produced in conſequence, become as unlike in each as two tragedies formed upon extreme different ſubjects.

But the caſe is much the contrary, with avarice, jealouſy, vanity, hypocriſy, and other vices, conſidered as the ſubjects of comedy; it would be eaſier to double, and treble, all the tragedies of our greateſt poets, and multiply their ſubjects almoſt wihout end, than introduce again upon the ſtage, any of Moliere's principal characters; not

that the popular vices belonging to ſuch, are leſs capable of diverſification, or are leſs varied by different circumſtances than the vices, and paſſions of heroes, but that if they were to be brought on again in comedies (except by a firſt-rate genius) they would be leſs diſtinct, leſs exact, leſs forcible, and conſequently leſs applauded; pleaſantry, and ridicule, requiring to be more ſtrongly marked than heroiſm, and pathos, which principally ſupport themſelves by their own force.

If comedy was amongſt us what it is in Spain, a kind of romance, conſiſting of many circumſtances, and intrigues, perplexed, and diſentangled, merely for the purpoſe of ſurpriſe, there would be always a reſource found in a variety of incidents; but the caſe is very different; real comedy calls for *new characters*; multiplicity of accidents, and the laborious contrivance of an intrigue, no more than *ſentimental drivelling*, will be allowed to ſhelter a weak genius, who would find great conveniences in either way of writing; her taſte requires an air leſs conſtrained, and ſuch a freedom, and eaſe of manners, as equally preclude the *preacher*, and *romance writer*; allowing nothing but a ſucceſſion of characters reſembling nature,

and

and falling in without any laboured contrivance.

But let us conſider the final purpoſes of tragedy and comedy. Is not the one the art of ſtriking thoſe ſtrings of the heart which are moſt natural, *terror*, and *pity?* And is not the other, the art of making us *laugh?* now the gentleman, and the ruſtic, in tragedy, have both ſenſibility and tenderneſs of heart, perhaps, in a greater or leſs degree; but as they are *men* alike, the heart is moved by the ſame touches; whereas in comedy the ſtrings which muſt be touched for this purpoſe, are not the ſame in the gentleman, and the ruſtic. The latter will laugh out on the coarſeſt jeſt, whereas the former is only to be moved by a delicate conceit; the paſſions depending on nature, merriment upon education.

The ſpectators of a tragedy, if they have but little knowledge, are almoſt all on a level; but with reſpect to comedy, we have many claſſes of people, all of whom will judge in their own way. The laughter of a theatre is of a very different ſtamp with that which is given to good humour, conviviality, complaiſance, reſpect, and flattery. In theſe artifice and wine, are the general motives; but in a theatre every ſpectator impartially judges of wit, by his own ſtand-

ard, and meaſures its extent and force by his capacity, and condition. Thus different capacities and conditions of men, making them diverted on very different occaſions, it requires the higheſt exertion of genius, to diffuſe *wit* or humour, ſo as it ſhall be univerſally felt.

If, therefore, we conſider the end of the tragic and comic poet, the comedian muſt be involved in much more difficulties, without taking in the obſtructions to be encountered equally by both, in an art which conſiſts in raiſing the paſſions, or the mirth of a great multitude. The tragedian has little to do but to reflect upon his own thoughts, and draw from his heart thoſe ſentiments which will certainly make their way to the hearts of others; whilſt the comedian muſt take many forms, and change himſelf, like a ſecond Proteus, almoſt into as many perſons as he undertakes to divert. In ſhort, to make the former, is to get materials together, and to arrange them like a ſkilful architect; but to make the latter, is to build, like Æſop, in the air. Hence we would give the preferencc to comedy, which we would be underſtood, however, by no means, to pronounce as a dogma, but as an opinion we have a right to give upon a general ſubject of enquiry.

CHAP. XX.

Of PANTOMIME.

THE name of pantomime, which ſignifies an imitator of every thing, was firſt given to thoſe comedians, who imitated and explained all ſorts of ſubjects by geſtures. It originated amongſt the Romans, as we are told by Zozimus, and Suidas, under the reign of Auguſtus Cæſar.

The two firſt inventors of this new art, were Pylades, and Bathyllus, who have both rendered their names celebrated in the Roman hiſtory. They were both rivals in their art, the former protected by the Emperor, the latter by Mecænas, and their diſputes, at times, ran ſo high with the public, that Cæſar himſelf once adviſing Pylades to live in greater harmony with his competitor, the other had the confidence to remark, "That the beſt thing that could happen to him, was to ſee his people buſied in ſuch a diſpute;" thereby indicating, that he could carry on the purpoſes of government more uninterruptedly.

What ſeems very ſurpriſing, that thoſe pantomimes who ſo charmed the Roman people

people in this æra of their higheſt poliſh, and refinement, did not make uſe of the motions of their face; it being certain that they geſticulated with *maſks*, in the ſame manner as the other comedians. Lucian ſays, in his treatiſe of dancing, "That the pantomimic maſk had not a wide mouth, like thoſe of common comedians, but was much handſomer;" and Macrobius relates, "That Pylades being vexed one day when he was acting the character of *Hercules Furens*, becauſe the ſpectators complained his geſticulation was extravagant," cried out to them, "Don't you know, ye fools, that I am acting the part of a greater fool than yourſelves."

Yet, notwithſtanding this very great inconvenience, the pantomime was ſo entire maſter of his action, and rendered his expreſſion ſo marking, and intelligible, that their general character was,——

Tot linguæ quot membra viro, mirabilis eſt ars
Quæ facit articulos, ore ſilenti loqui.

and Caſſidorus (with many other reſpectable authors) after ſpeaking of the tragedies, and comedies, that were repreſented on the ſtage, calls the pantomimes, "Men whoſe eloquent hands, had a tongue as it were on the

tip of each finger: men who ſpoke while they were ſilent, and who knew how to make an entire recital without opening their mouths; men, in ſhort, whom Polyhymnia had formed, in order to ſhew that there was no neceſſity for articulating in order to convey our thoughts."

Lucian, likewiſe, declares himſelf a zealous partiſan of theſe dumb comedians, and we find, he took a pleaſure in relating ſuch facts as might be an honour to their profeſſion. Amongſt other things, he ſays, that a Cynic philoſopher treated their art as a childiſh amuſement, and defined it a collection of geſticulations, which the muſic and decorations rendered barely tolerable; but a pantomime of Nero's court, willing to ſhew this Philoſopher he was in the wrong, executed before him the amours of Mars and Venus, in dumb declamation, without any inſtrument to accompany him; upon which the Cynic frankly acknowledged they were maſters of a real art.

The ſame author relates, that a king whoſe dominions bordered upon the Euxine ſea, happening to be at Rome under the reign of Nero, begged of that prince very earneſtly, to let him have a pantomime he had ſeen act, that he might make him his general interpreter in all languages, "This fellow

fellow (ſaid he) will make all the world underſtand him, whereas I am obliged to have I don't know how many interpreters, in order to keep up a correſpondence with my neighbours, who ſpeak a great many different languages, which I don't underſtand." Tho' 'tis not very difficult to conceive how the pantomimes could contrive to give an intelligible deſcription of an action, and to ſignify by their geſture the words taken in their proper ſenſe; ſuch as the heavens, the earth, a man, &c. But how is it poſſible (ſome will aſk) to expreſs by geſtures, words taken in a *figurative ſenſe*, which occur ſo frequently in poetry.

The only ſatisfactory anſwer we can give to this queſtion is, to relate the following ſtory from Macrobius, which in a great reſpect, may give us ſome idea of the manner. Hilas, the diſciple, and competitor of Pylades, (the firſt inventor of pantomime) executed a monologue after his manner, which ended with theſe words, "*The Great Agamemnon*;" Hilas to expreſs them, made all the geſtures of a man that wants to meaſure another bigger than himſelf; when Pylades, who was in the pit, unable to contain himſelf, cried out, "Friend, by this you make Agamemnon only a *big* man, not a *great* man." On this the people immediately

called out for Pylades to perform it himſelf; he complied; and when he came to that part for which he had publicly cenſured his diſciple, he repreſented by his geſture, and attitude, the countenance of a perſon immerſed in deep meditation, pointing out very properly by this action, that a man greater than others was he who had profounder thoughts.

As we cannot, however, bring ocular teſtimony to the repreſentations of thoſe pantomimes, we are as little capable of deciding on the poſitive merit of their art, and how it was poſſible to be executed with ſuch aſtoniſhing ſucceſs, as we are of the method of dividing the antient declamation between two actors; thoſe, however, who are diverted with ſeeing the Italian comedy at this day, may be even from, this ſpecimen, convinced, that ſeveral ſcenes may be executed without ſpeaking; but we can alledge a fact as related by the Abbe Du Bos, which will evince better than any argument the poſſibility of the execution.

"About the beginning of this century, a princeſs *, remarkable for her great talents, and

* Tho' the Abbe Du Bos has not named this princeſs, we think it pretty evident, he muſt mean Chriſtina Queen of Sweden, daughter of the Great Guſtavus Adolphus,

and taſte for public ſpectacles, had a mind to ſee an eſſay of the antient pantomimic art, in order to acquire a clearer idea of their repreſentations, than ſhe had conceived by reading. For want of actors practiſed in this art, ſhe ſolicited a man and woman dancer of a ſuperior genius in their profeſſion, and extremely capable of inventing. She had ordered them to get ready, to repreſent only with geſticulation, at the theatre *de Sceaux*, the ſcene of the fourth act of the Horatii of Corneille, in which the young Horatius kills his ſiſter Camilla. They accordingly executed it, accompanied with muſic, adapted by a great maſter, to the words of the ſcene; the effect of which was, our two new pantomimes animated one another to ſuch a degree, by their geſticulations, and expreſſive movements, that at length they ſhed tears, and conſequently communicated them to the whole audience."

From this inſtance, which is too recent, and comes from too reſpectable an author to be doubted, we may very well credit antiquity for the ſurpriſing accounts of their

phus, whoſe *penchant* for the fine arts, and the general ſtudy of antiquity was ſo great, that for the purpoſe of giving up all her time to travel, and improvement, ſhe quitted the throne of her anceſtors, in the very meridian of life and power,

pantomimes; particularly, when we conſider the very great pains they were at in breeding them up to this profeſſion. Under an idea, that caſtration produced a ſuppleneſs in their bodies ſuperior to other men, they all previouſly underwent this operation; the pantomimer likewiſe required a particular ſize, and make; and after he had been inſtructed in feats of activity in attitude, and grace, he underwent a regular ſtudy in muſic, hiſtory, and ſeveral literary accompliſhments.

This art at preſent lingers in Italy; in England, tho' it never arrived to perfection in all its parts, (perhaps on account of our natural action not being lively and eloquent enough to be readily underſtood without the accompanyment of diſcourſe) yet it received great encouragement at times; particularly, under the celebrated Lun, and his pupil Mr. Rich, late ſole patentee of Covent-Garden theatre; who as far as mimicry went in their own perſons (bating the wide difference between antient and modern pantomimic education) were perhaps little inferior to the artiſts of antiquity.

But it has been the caſe with this country, that however, we may have occaſionally ſucceeded in pantomime performers, the art itſelf came to us in a mutilated, and imperfect

fect ſtate. With the Romans, there was always a fable invented, or taken from hiſtory, compoſed of regular parts, by which it became a conſiderable ſpecies of the drama; full of inſtruction, and entertainment, and was in conſequence (as we have before obſerved) often much more followed than tragedies and comedies. With us, we never had a fable important enough to draw the attention, and eſteem of the curious; conſequently the whole force of the pantomime reſted on a ſingle character, who generally waſted his attitudes in the explanation of trifles. But even theſe imperfect remains of pantomime are now exploded; for ſince the death of Mr. Rich, we have had no pantomime who did not conſider his art to conſiſt in fidgetting, ſkipping, and leaping; and as for fable, it is entirely ſubſtituted by a jumble of mechanical deceptions, obviouſly calculated for no other purpoſe, than to draw together the great, and little vulgar, at the expence of public taſte, and judgement.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

Of FARCE.

THIS word is generally allowed to derive from the French word *Farci*, which ſignifies *forced meat*, or ſtuffing; perhaps alluding to its being *forced in* amongſt more rational amuſements, to make the whole more palatable to the groſs of an audience. It ſeems to be a Gothic imitation of the antient Mimes, and originally conſiſted of little pieces of drollery, exhibited by buffoons in the open ſtreets, to gather people together, as is done at this day, in many ſquares of this metropolis, by mountebanks, and others. The poets reforming the wildneſs of thoſe primitive farces, removed them from the ſtreets to the theatre, and inſtead of being performed by Jack Puddings, brought them ſomewhat to the manner of comedy, and had them performed by regular comedians.

The difference between the two on our ſtage is, that comedy keeps to nature and probability, being confined to certain laws, and preſcriptions, whereas the other, *occaſionally* diſpenſes with all laws; its principal end being merely to make merry, it conſequently

ly rejects nothing that may contribute to that point, however wild, and extravagant; hence the dialogue is uſually low, the characters of inferior rank, the fable trivial, or ridiculous, and nature, and truth, every where heightened to afford the more palpable ridicule.

But we are every day improving in this department of the drama; as the farces of theſe laſt twenty years, inſtead of exhibiting the moſt improbable fables, and loweſt ſpecies of humour, have aſſumed the denomination of petite pieces of comedy (or as they are generally called comedies of two acts,) which, however, they may want the full extent of the *vis comica*, are many of them, far from being deficient in outline, humour, and obſervation. We ſhould conſider it ſome degree of injuſtice, not to mention that the public are principally indebted for this reform to Mr. Murphy, who has ſhewn ſuch a happineſs in his choice of ſubjects, and ſuch a knowledge of the world in treating them, that from their real merit, and the warm reception they ſtill meet with (notwithſtanding their novelty has been long ſince worn off) they bid fair to lead the preſent ſtock of acting farces, whilſt a real taſte for this ſpecies of the drama remains amongſt us.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

A Sketch of the Education of the Greek and Roman Actors.

'TIS but reaſonable to judge of the progreſs a nation made in arts, of which we have no monuments to found a ſolid deciſion of, by the progreſs this very nation made in other arts of which we have ſome remains. Now the monuments extant of poetry, eloquence, painting, ſculpture, and the architecture of the antients, are evident proofs that they were ſkilful in all theſe arts, and had carried them to a high degree of perfection; from theſe, why ſhould not our opinion be in favour of their theatrical repreſentations, ſo as to incline us to think, we ſhould give them (could we but ſee them) the ſame commendations we beſtow on their buildings, ſtatues, and writings? and from this line of deduction, may we not draw from the excellence of their poems, a ſtrong preſumption in favour of the merit of their actors, who muſt, to have done juſtice to ſuch excellent compoſitions, be perfect maſters in judgement, grace, and elocution?

But

But we can go further in this point than mere inferences; we are poſitively informed of ſome facts, that ſhew the profeſſion to be at once liberal, and acquired by thoſe progreſſive exerciſes, and ſtudies neceſſary to ſupport ſuch excellent compoſitions. In the firſt place, we are informed, that an apprenticeſhip (where in all probability none were admitted but thoſe who had proper perſonal, and mental qualifications, to recommend them) was abſolutely neceſſary. Cicero tells us *, that frequently after this, the tragic players uſed to practiſe whole years before they appeared upon the ſtage; and the Scholiaſt of Ariſtophanes, poſitively ſays, no actor could publicly appear on the ſtage 'till he was *thirty years of age*; a period of life, however, it may be now thought too late for the repreſentation of youthful paſſions, and the general ardour of the profeſſion; yet by no means ſo,—when we conſider the various kinds of knowledge, and laborious exerciſes, demanded from an actor of antiquity.

They likewiſe, in the beginning declaimed ſitting; with a view of acquiring (which it certainly effected) a greater facility when they come to ſpeak ſtanding upon the ſtage; For

* Cic. de Orat. lib. I.

For as Quintilian * obſerves, "The labour we go through in our apprenticeſhip, ſhould be much harder than what we are to endure when we become maſters of our art." Hence it was uſual, to exerciſe the Gladiators with heavier arms than thoſe with which they fought.

Cicero again informs us †, that the great actors would never ſpeak a word in the morning before they had expectorated methodically their voice, letting it loſe by degrees, that they might not hurt the organs by emitting it with too much precipitancy, and violence. They likewiſe took care to lye in bed during this exerciſe; after they had done acting,---they in this poſture, carefully ſhut up the voice again, (if we may be allowed the expreſſion) firſt raiſing it to the higheſt tone to which they had aſcended in declaiming, and afterwards depreſſing it ſucceſſively, 'till they came to the loweſt.

The ſingularity of this aſſertion, though coming from ſuch authority, may be doubted, did not the writings of the antients abound with facts, which ſhew that their attention to whatever might ſtrengthen, and improve the voice, was carried even to a degree of ſuperſtition. We find by the third chapter

* Quint. lib. II. † Cic. de Orat. lib. I.

chapter of the eleventh book of Quintilian's Inſtitutes, that with reſpect to all kinds of eloquence, the antients made a profound ſtudy of the voice, and of all the methods for clarifying, and ſtrengthening it. Nay, the art of managing, and preſerving it, was become a particular profeſſion, and Pliny points out in ſeveral parts of his natural hiſtory no leſs than twenty plants which were reckoned ſpecifics for that purpoſe. Nero * was the inventor of a new method of ſtrengthening the voice, which conſiſted in declaiming as loud as poſſible, with a leaden plate upon his breaſt; and Suetonius † adds to this account, that upon his return from Greece, he was ſo extremely careful of not hurting it, that he not only made uſe of ſeveral particular drugs, but whenever he muſtered his troops, he declined calling each ſoldier by his name, according to the cuſtom of the Romans, but ordered a domeſtic to perform that office.

From the great care and attention, ſhewn by the antients in this particular, we may infer, what induſtry the ſeveral parts of their profeſſion coſt them. We have already ſeen, in the former part of this work, that a knowledge of muſic, and dancing, were likewiſe

* Pliny hiſt. lib. 39. cap. III. † Suetonius in Nerone.

likewiſe abſolutely neceſſary, otherwiſe the ſaltation, and recitation, could not be performed to any advantage; ſo that upon the whole, we may reaſonably conclude, that the entire qualifications of an actor were ſuch as gave him many, and ſuperior advantages to other profeſſions.

The public at large, aſſiſted by their encouragement, ſuch combined talents; by holding the profeſſion liberal, and paying every compliment to its profeſſors. The ſpectators who compoſed an antient audience, tho' ſo very numerous, ſat with the greateſt attention, and decorum; if any one offended, he was immediately turned out by the proper officers in waiting, and if he perſiſted in diſturbing the audience, a fine was his puniſhment. In Greece, the actors were generally perſons of the firſt rank in letters as in family, and for the moſt part orators and poets; nay, ſometimes we find kings themſelves unbinding, for a while, the diadems from their brows, to improve and entertain their ſubjects on the ſtage.

In Rome, indeed, from the ſcandalous lives of ſome of the loweſt of the profeſſion, the comedians were excluded from the freedom of the city; yet thoſe who became eminent in their art, and undebauched in their lives, were ſure of acquiring riches, freedom,

freedom, and the public eſteem. 'Tis to the Grecian actor Satyrus, the world is indebted to the thunders of Demoſthenes, and we have it under his own hand, that the attic eloquence of Cicero received no inconſiderable force, and poliſh from the precepts and examples of his friend Roſcius.

N CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

General Inſtructions for ſucceeding in the Art of Acting.

FROM the preceding chapter, we are enabled to judge, that the profeſſion of acting is not as much attended to now as it was formerly. Without going into invidious compariſons, we ſee the one attained by a previous education and uncommon induſtry; the other generally taken up to indulge with more impunity the follies or vices of youth, or as the dernier reſource of difficulty and diſtreſs. We ſhould be ſorry, however, to ſay, there are not ſome exceptions to this aſſertion, particularly *one*, who has aſſiſted, perhaps, the greateſt natural genius with the moſt uncommon induſtry, who has thought no period of excellence precluded him from admonition, and who has made no other uſe of the early and united applauſes of the world, than as a ſpur to quicken him in the further purſuits of fame.

Were all his fraternity, like this *great example*, we ſhould have no occaſion to ſit down to a treatiſe of this kind, (as 'tis from great geniuſes rules are drawn, not preſcribed to;)

to;) but the contrary being the fact, we imagine ſome general rules relative to the profeſſion, may not be altogether unuſeful; particularly as we are led to believe, that many actors, hurried away by the vulgar prejudice, that *nature* muſt do *all*, have, in conſequence, paid little, or no attention to *art*; thinking, perhaps, her aſſiſtance not only immaterial, but incompatible with the genius of their profeſſion.

The moſt methodical treatiſe on this ſubject, we have ever remembered to have ſeen, is Mr. Aaron Hill's "Treatiſe on the Art of Acting," where he has diſtributed the whole into ten dramatic paſſions, joy, grief, fear, anger, pity, ſcorn, hatred, jealouſy, wonder, and love. Each of theſe he has afterwards defined, and added to this definition, particular directions how to accommodate the voice and action; ſo that, from ſo copious a treatiſe, one would be led to imagine he had exhauſted the ſubject. But he has, in our opinion, rather miſtaken the manner of treating it; attempting to give a rule for every thing, he has reduced thoſe things to a ſtandard of mechaniſm, which ſhould be left to *nature* and *obſervation*; and when he talks of the *ſtretching of the neck*, the *inflation of the breaſt*, the *erection of the back bone*, the *minute* diſpoſition of the *arms*, *wriſt*, *fingers*, *hip*, *knee*, *ancle*, &c.

he writes more like a Martinet on Tactics, than a philoſopher in the inveſtigation of the human paſſions.

Shakeſpeare, however, has given us a ſpecimen of this kind of inſtruction in the paſſion of anger, which is at once ſo much a *rule* and an *example*, that 'tis impoſſible for a man of feeling to expreſs the ſpeech otherwiſe than he has directed; as our readers will readily judge from the ſpeech itſelf.

" Now imitate the action of the tyger;
" Stiffen the ſinews, ſummon up the blood,
" Lend fierce and dreadful aſpect to the eye;
" Set the teeth cloſe, and ſtretch the noſtril
" wide,
" Hold hard the breath, and bend up every
" ſpirit
" To its full height."

Leſſons containing ſuch admirable inſtructions as this ſpeech gives us, we would recommend to the ſerious peruſal of every actor; but this great natural preceptor, was too buſy in drawing the paſſions themſelves to leave us many rules how they ſhould be mechanically expreſſed; hence this knowledge muſt principally be obtained by every performer's own obſervation and natural feelings; rules, ſo exceedingly exact, (except, perhaps, in the hands of ſo inimitable a maſter as Shakeſpeare) would

would be the fetters, inſtead of the aids of genius. But to proceed,

In the proſecution of every liberal art or profeſſion, it is neceſſary for the pupil to undergo ſome previous education. The divine, the lawyer, the phyſician, have their courſes of ſtudy marked out for them; nay, the mechanic has his ſeven years apprenticeſhip to recommend him; and it would form one of thoſe ridiculous circumſtances, which perhaps never happened, to ſee a man ſtand candidate for any one of theſe, without attempting at leaſt to deſerve it. Yet ſo it is, that the profeſſion of an actor, which is little leſs than a combination of the polite arts, ſeems to be almoſt univerſally neglected. The *commoneſt educations*, with an *inclination* for the ſtage, generally make out a paſſport for its candidates, and with theſe *powerful accompliſhments*, they look forward, even to the chair of a Garrick.

But, like their fellow-dreamers in matrimony, they ſoon wake *behind the curtain*; they diſcover ſomething wanting in themſelves to gain them that applauſe from the public, which youthful paſſions ſuggeſted; the time, however, paſſes too pleaſantly behind the ſcenes to correct this, by ſacrificing their leiſure to improvement; and finding themſelves kept in countenance by numbers

in the ſame line of profeſſion, they, by degrees, entirely loſe ſight of it. Thus, from the dearth of good actors, (occaſioned by the ſame neglect) they riſe to rank on the theatre more from *ſeniority*, than either natural, or acquired abilities, and converting a liberal profeſſion into a *profitable trade*, they are content if they can merely *go through their buſineſs*, heedleſs of fame and reputation. Without meaning to be particular, or the leaſt ill-natured, we believe this picture may claim too general a likeneſs amongſt the ſons and daughters of the ſtage, to be rejected as a caricatura. To endeavour then, to make them more perfect in a profeſſion, which has ſo many agreeable, yet difficult parts to be known, we ſhall, in the courſe of theſe chapters, draw out ſuch a ſketch of theatrical education, as we think, added to a natural genius, cannot fail (if attended to) of anſwering that purpoſe.

We muſt take it for granted, that every man, who ſtands a candidate for theatrical reputation, muſt be at leaſt free from thoſe perſonal defects that unfit him for the ſtage; for ſo ſingular and critical are the requiſites for this profeſſion, that the *body*, as well as the *mind*, becomes the ſubject of a ſpectator's animadverſion; and the leaſt aukwardneſs and deficiency in the former, will operate ſo

power-

powerfully on the latter, as to involve it in all its errors. But this is a point ſo obvious to the commoneſt obſervation, that we ſhall no longer inſiſt on it.

In reſpect to what degree of education may be neceſſary for an actor, we think a thorough knowledge of the Engliſh claſſics ſufficient; yet, under this head, we would include tranſlations of ſuch of the antients as may be neceſſary; not that we would, by any means, preclude a more learned education, provided it was accompanied with all thoſe other branches of knowledge, which form the requiſites of the ſtage; but it ſo very rarely happens, that a deep ſcholar has ſacrificed ſufficiently to the graces—it is only on this principle, we think it better not to riſque ſo wide a compaſs of education.

But to be more particular. It is proper for every actor to be well-ſtudied in *grammar*; as this is an art which teaches the relation of words to each other, it will inſtruct him in their force and meaning, and conſequently enable him to ſpeak with emphaſis and correctneſs. To depend on the *marks* and *punctuation* of play-houſe tranſcribers, (as we are afraid too many of the profeſſion do) is very often depending on ignorance, ſanctioned by cuſtom, as ſuch are in general exceedingly uneducated, and have no other guides than the

books and opinions of prompters, who are very often themſelves not much better informed. A knowledge of grammar, beſide detecting the ignorance and miſtakes of tranſcribers, will likewiſe teach an actor to detect the lapſes of authors themſelves, who, from being too warmly engaged in the main deſign, or through careleſsneſs, or ignorance, will ſometimes commit the greateſt inaccuracies; in ſhort, ſo many are the benefits reſulting from this branch of ſcience, that we muſt conſider it as an introduction to the profeſſion, not to be diſpenſed with on any account whatſoever.

To the knowledge of grammar, we would join an acquaintance with that part of the *Belles Lettres*, which includes poetry and oratory. By the former, the actor will not only be able to accuſtom his mind to beautiful images and deſcriptions, but it will improve his taſte, in directing him to ſeize upon thoſe paſſages which he goes through, in the courſe of his profeſſion, with feeling and propriety. The meaſure of poetry will likewiſe harmonize his ear, and give him that facility in ſpeaking on the ſtage, equal to that in common converſation, the want of which we have often known to disfigure the fineſt paſſages, and interrupt the warmeſt feelings.

In

In reſpect to oratory, we do not mean that an actor ſhould go through the regular ſtudy of it as laid down in the ſchools, the *exordium*, *narration*, *propoſition*, *confirmation*, *refutation*, and *concluſion*; however theſe may be neceſſary in the ſenate, the pulpit, or the bar, a leſs minute knowledge may ſerve him, as his buſineſs is not to *invent*, but *repeat*; his theory, therefore, may be formed on the tranſlated orations of Demoſthenes, Cicero, Iſocrates, &c. with the moſt ſelect of the moderns; his practice on thoſe of our moſt celebrated lawyers, ſenators, and divines. The uſe that ſuch a knowledge will be to him in his profeſſion, muſt be obvious to all thoſe who can judge of the beauties of dramatic declamation; who but an orator, for inſtance, ſhould be entruſted with the ſpeech of Anthony over the dead body of Julius Cæſar? a compoſition ſo happily formed of the *pathetic* and *ingenious*, as, perhaps, might enter the liſts with the moſt finiſhed orations of antiquity.

Though it may ſeem unneceſſary to inſiſt in this place, on an intimate knowledge of *dramatic poetry*, which, in fact, is the very *buſineſs* of an actor, yet the great neglect we have obſerved, even in this particular, induces us to mention it. It is very true, an actor, in the mere routine of buſineſs, will be

be obliged to be much converſant in this knowledge; but how does he acquire it? he takes it up in ſcraps, and at intervals, when his duty immediately calls him out, which is as ſoon again forgot; one, therefore, who would wiſh to take up this part of his profeſſion regularly, ſhould not depend on ſuch *incidental* ſtudies, he ſhould methodically begin with the ſtudy of the dramatic claſſics, ſuch as Shakeſpeare, Jonſon, Beaumont, and Fletcher, together with ſuch others as are upon the ſtock of acting plays. By the frequent reading of theſe, he will not only aſſiſt his memory, but have a view of all the parts, meaning, and deſign of each reſpective author; ſo that, whenever he is caſt for a part, even on the ſhorteſt notice, he will poſſeſs the general idea of it ſo ſtrongly, as to make the remaining ſtudy of it light and amuſing.

In this ſtudy, it would be a further aſſiſtance both to his memory and imagination, if he would mark, with a pencil, particular emphaſis on words, or remarks upon characters, as they ſhould ſtrike him; ſo floating is the imagination, and unconnected the judgement, that it is not at all times we are capable of exerciſing either the one, or the other alike; to ſeize the opportunity then, will be an advantage, which thoſe who truſt to their general

neral recollection, will find themſelves, for the moſt part, deprived of.

Hiſtory holds too principal a rank in this catalogue to be omitted; on the contrary, it is highly neceſſary for the actor to know it minutely; by this branch of knowledge, he will be previouſly informed of moſt of the plots of our beſt dramatic writers, and, from this collateral aſſiſtance, be enabled to conceive his author more ſtrongly, a circumſtance, we believe, we need not inſiſt of what infinite advantage. The performer, likewiſe, who would go deep in his profeſſion, ſhould not be content with modern hiſtory only, he ſhould have a view of Greek and Roman events, and theſe not only in the middle, or more aſcertained ages, but in the manner their early periods have been tranſmitted to us, even with all their fables, errors, and falſhoods. He ought to know, for example, all that the antient hiſtorians have related of the labours of Hercules, of the expedition of the Argonauts, of the ſiege of Troy, &c. &c. for though he is at liberty to give what degree of credit he pleaſes to particular paſſages, it is neceſſary for him to know in what manner hiſtory relates them; by this he will have a previous anticipation of all thoſe plays that are founded on hiſtorical events, he will enter with more ſpirit and

depth

depth into the character he repreſents, and by knowing all the little turns and peculiarities of its complexion, mark it with double force and illuſtration.

Take any of our hiſtoric plays, Henry VIII. for inſtance, and let the part of Henry be given to two performers of equal merit, in every other reſpect, but that the one is well acquainted with Engliſh hiſtory, the other not, and ſure it cannot become a queſtion, which of them ſhall moſt pleaſe a critical audience? the one will have no other clew but the poet, who, though excellent in his art, from being confined to a point of time, could not give ſuch a whole length view of that courageous, ſplendid, yet laſcivious deſpot; whilſt the other, taking in all the parts of his character from the hiſtorian, as well as the poet, is not only capable of drawing a ſtronger outline, but adding thoſe nicer touches which give manner and finiſh to the picture.

As an appendage to hiſtory, it will be neceſſary to be acquainted with ſuch books as inſtruct in the antient and modern dreſſes, as well as religious ceremonies, triumphs, ovations, proceſſions, &c. for though theſe matters may be thought peculiarly the manager's province, the knowledge of them are of very great

great uſe to the performer. A man who has no previous idea of a Roman habit, or Roman proceſſion, cannot be eaſily reconciled to the one, or inſtructed in the other; whereas, by knowing their uſes from reading, that the one was conformable to the public and domeſtic exerciſes; the other to the emulative and warlike ſpirit of that people, he will not only find himſelf more at eaſe, but feel all the propriety and force of their application.

It may be the caſe, that a performer may be under a manager totally ignorant of this branch of his profeſſion, which ſometimes has happened in capital cities; very often on ſummer excurſions. This ſuperior information then muſt ſtand him in great ſtead, by having it in his power to accommodate himſelf in his own performances, as well as holding out his uſe to the manager, who will be under the neceſſity of proportionally rewarding qualifications ſo intimately connected with his own intereſt.

This knowledge may be collected in going through a courſe of hiſtory; but the books we would particularly recommend, are "Strutt's view of the manners, cuſtoms, habits, &c. of the Engliſh, Ferrario De Re Veſtiaria, Montfaucon, Potter's Greek, and Kennet's Roman Antiquities."

Tho'

Tho' we have before aſſerted, that an acquaintance with the *Engliſh claſſics* may be ſufficient for conducting a performer through the literary walks of his profeſſion, under this head we beg leave to include, a tolerable knowledge of the *French* language. The ſtate of Engliſh education is indeed at preſent, ſo modelled (whether for the better, or not, we ſhall not here enquire into) as, perhaps, might make this requiſition unneceſſary; a variety of French phraſes having crept into our writings and converſations, ſo as to make it almoſt impoſſible to read modern books, or keep modern company, without being acquainted with both languages. 'Tis a player's particular duty, however, to know French as well from its being ſo conſtantly interlarded in dramatic works, as the neceſſity he may be under of filling a French character; for though we have no abſolute Frenchman in our drama, who ſpeaks nothing elſe but his native language, yet we have many whoſe idiom, inaccuracies and manners muſt be tranſplanted into Engliſh.

We ſhall conclude this chapter with recommending the two polite accompliſhments of *fencing* and *dancing*, as not only uſeful to give a poliſh to general ſtudies, but, in this profeſſion, abſolutely neceſſary. The firſt of theſe on the French theatre, does not ſeem

theſe

altogether ſo neceſſary; but on our own, where battles and murders are conſtantly repreſented, it muſt rank as an indiſpenſable part of theatrical education, or (to ſpeak more properly) *theatrical execution*. The introduction of this barbariſm we have already decried, but ſince it is ſo eſtabliſhed that there is ſcarce an Engliſh tragedy, but what has a death before the curtain; ſurely it is much more decent for a performer to kill, and be killed, *ſecundum artem*, than jobbed to death after the manner of an aſſaſſination?

Another uſe in fencing, it gives the graceful and unembarraſſed uſe of the ſword, as an appendage to dreſs; and to aſſiſt this the more, we would recommend the conſtant uſe of it in *private* as well as in *public*: this may ſeem trifling in theory, but the want of it in practice is readily felt both by the eye and imagination; as it is impoſſible we can ever form the combination of a gentleman where even ſo ſlight a defect of ornament appears.

Dancing is even ſtill more uſeful than fencing. We do not mean by this that jumble of *freaks*, and *quick ſteps*, which the vulgar of moſt countries denominate dancing, but that graceful deportment of the body, in conjunction with the eyes, and muſcles of the face, by which a man may expreſs his thoughts independent of the articulation of ſyllables, and words; this gives a grace to every

every thing an actor ſays or does upon the ſtage, and 'twas this carried, perhaps, to its utmoſt perfection, which gave riſe to an obſervation lately made on a celebrated French dancer,

"*That all her ſteps were ſentiments.*"

We would therefore recommend it to every performer not to depend on the early knowledge he might have acquired in this art, and which he might have learned under provincial maſters,---but to take particular pains to be inſtructed by ſome *capital ſtage dancer*; who will pay a greater attention to the deportment and grace of his perſon, than particular ſteps. It is not enough, likewiſe, that he has once learned under ſuch a maſter, he ſhould keep himſelf in frequent practice; nor would it be amiſs, to add to it, ſome of the other agile exerciſes, ſuch as vaulting, wreſtling, &c. The body thus educated (if we may uſe ſuch an expreſſion) is the more readily fitted to perform all its ſtage exerciſes. Whether an actor flies into the arms of his miſtreſs, or kneels at the feet of his ſovereign,—whether he makes ſhort angles, or takes long ſtrides,—whether he ſprings from a throne, or ſinks on a bed of ſtate; all ſhould be performed with grace, and nature.

Such

ſuch ſpeak the ſilent language of the ſoul, and in theſe inſtances, more than ſupply the place of words.

Whereas, on the contrary, how often do we ſee players, otherwiſe poſſeſſed of feeling, and judgement, for the want of being inſtructed in theſe particulars, commit the moſt glaring improprieties? how often do we ſee them *meaſure* the ſtage in a mechanical long and ſhort ſtep, like the verſes of the antients, turn their backs upon the audience in walk ing and ſpeaking---croſs each other as if they were joſtling on a race-courſe, or deſcend the footſteps of a throne, like a common ſtair-caſe. In ſhort, perform all the evolutions of the ſtage ſo awkwardly, as to diſſolve the charm of illuſion, and, in ſpite of the powers of the poet, turn, perhaps, the whole ſcene into an ill timed but unavoidable ridicule.

CHAP. XXIV.

Continuation of the ſame Subject.

THESE fundamental inſtructions being laid down;—to call them into practice, as well as to recommend others dependent on them, ſhall be the buſineſs of this chapter.

It is an obſervation of Freſnoy's on painting, which is an art by no means irrelative to acting, that the pupil who would wiſh to go lengths in his profeſſion, *ſhould do ſomething every day*. We would recommend the ſame advice to an actor; for, whether he has a particular part to ſtudy or not, this conſtant exerciſe will make his profeſſion light to him; it will enlarge his views, perfect his memory, and what perhaps ſhould be as much attended to as any, keep him from diſſipation, that bane of theatrical manners.

In his courſe of reading, he ſhould be particularly attentive to read *loud*, and *diſtinct*, and upon no account whatſoever to *hum* over his part, as is the too conſtant practice. By his keeping his voice thus upon the ſtretch, he will be enabled to know the whole of its compaſs,

compaſs, ſtrengthen its weakneſſes, modulate its tones; and, in ſhort, by degrees, bring it under ſuch abſolute ſubjection, as to make his duty on the ſtage, and in the cloſet equally eaſy.

He muſt attend to the ſame practice at rehearſals; and further, ſcarcely abate an article of action, or emphaſis there. Every one acquainted with modern rehearſals, muſt know how looſely, and how much under the par of their abilities the generality of performers go through their parts, and except it is a capital actor, or actreſs, that has a new one to get ſtudied in, the reſt are little better than a *theatrical muſter*, who are called together to be in readineſs for the night's review, without little more preparation than their bare appearances.

It is a ſaying almoſt in every body's mouth on the firſt night of a new, or revived play, if there ſhould appear any little lapſes of memory, or inaccuracies in acting, "That when the performers are more *practiſed* they will do better."—There is more indulgence than neceſſary perhaps in this remark,—why not equally, or at leaſt nearly as perfect the firſt night, as the fourth, fifth, or ſixth? did the performers go through the minutiæ of their ſeveral parts at rehearſal, as before an audience, and repeat them as often as ne-

ceſſary, the firſt night would be as much a night of perfection as any other; for to perſons much accuſtomed to the ſtage, the impreſſion of an audience can make little or no difference. Beſides, what makes the blunders of a firſt night, is not ſo much the want of memory, as of that *mutual play of action* which is neceſſary to give grace, and wholeneſs to the ſcene. Performers too frequently looking on this as a mere thing of courſe, neglect it at rehearſals, conſequently, when they come before the view of an audience, they go through it with an air of *novelty*, and *embarraſſment*, often diſagreeable in its conſequences to themſelves, but much more ſo to the poet, who, perhaps, has many years labour on the iſſue.

Being *ſtudied* in one anothers action, and manner, particularly in love ſcenes, &c. where a more intimate connection is neceſſary, performers are not only left at liberty to animate each ſpeech as it ſhould be, but to preſent a picture to the audience gracefully conformable to all the rules of variety, and relief. We have a capital actor and actreſs * in our recollection, now on the ſtage, who abſtracted from their other excellencies, play to each others graces ſo agreeably, that 'tis equally

* Mr. and Mrs. Barry.

equally difficult, at any time, to ſurprize them in an inelegant attitude, as it is to arraign their judgement, feeling, or expreſſion.

But to return—after an actor has read ſufficiently, it will be neceſſary to put this reading into practice, by going over ſome of the principal paſſages before a large mirror where he can ſee his whole figure; as was the cuſtom of ſeveral of the antient orators. This view of his perſon will teach him to adopt ſuch expreſſion of features, and accompanyments of action, as are moſt conformable to his character. It will by degrees, likewiſe remove, or correct, at leaſt, thoſe little imperfections of nature, and early acquired habits which have nearly the ſame ſtubbornneſs. Demoſthenes being in this reſpect, a ſtanding inſtance to reproach the *indolent*, as a glorious example to the *induſtrious*.

In this reflected ſtudy of himſelf, he ſhould take no other actor for his model, however high he might ſtand on the ſcale of dramatic excellence, except he, at the ſame time, *conceives* the part alike; otherwiſe, the imitation would be as dangerous as a painter copying any of the great maſters, without being himſelf acquainted with the

laws of expreſſion, and muſcular motion. In the extremity of the ſame line, let every ſpecies of *mimickry* be avoided; an art, however, it might tickle the ears of low malice, or now and then force an involuntary approbation from the judicious—is diſgraceful to any theatre. It is falſe in its principles, inhuman in its effects, and fatal to the actor who uſes it, as who can be practiſed in the line of right, who is every hour in the ſtudy of other people's defects?

We ſhall not here point out, that immenſe variety of accents of which the voice is ſuſceptible, and which ought to be employed on different occaſions, in order to do juſtice to the vaſt crowd of ſentiments that ariſe in the courſe of theatrical ſtudies. We are perſuaded, it is impoſſible to write upon this ſubject, ſo as to leave nothing unſaid that may illuſtrate it, at the ſame time, ſuch particulars as we may ſay, would, perhaps, be equally impoſſible to practiſe. Nature in forming mankind ſeldom throws even the moſt minute parts of two different men into the ſame mould. We find it very rare, that two faces have a ſtrong reſemblance of each other, but it, perhaps, never happened, that they could not be diſtinguiſhed. On the ſame ſcale of ſurpriſing variety we may obſerve, that

that the voices of men never exactly reſemble one another. How then, can one imagine himſelf capable to mark out the different turns, and cadences, peculiar to ſo many men, each of whom has a different voice adapted to his own particular genius, and immediately under its direction?

Action lies under the ſame difficulties, and as we have before obſerved, attempting to give particular rules for it, would be uſeleſs as impoſſible; an actor has therefore only to poſſeſs himſelf of the enthuſiaſm of his ſubject, conſult nature, and endeavour to imitate her. In this imitation, however, he ſhould not make too ſervile a copy, but heighten or depreſs, in common with painters, ſuch of her works as may be moſt conducive to his art, and the embelliſhment of ſtage effect. In ſhort, if a player ſhall ſo *act*, as to perſuade us the characters he repreſents are not *fictitious*, the illuſion then becomes complete, all that is *ſaid* is *felt*, and every thing paſſes for the *truth of action*, and the *language of the ſoul*.

However, as 'tis neceſſary for an actor to acquire all the aſſiſtances he can from art, compatible with the nature of his profeſſion, we would recommend him to be well ſtudied in ſome of the moſt celebrated Greek and Roman ſtatues, geſſes, buſts, &c. which he may

readily have an opportunity of doing, by frequenting the Royal Academy, or the Gallery of his Grace the Duke of Richmond; a nobleman, who has, upon the moſt liberal plan of patriotiſm, extended it even to the poliſh, and refinement of the public taſte, and to whom this country is indebted for the foundation of a *School of Statuary* *, at a period when the arts were without a royal protector.

Thoſe we would particularly recommend are as follow:

For the Men.

The two Antinouſes.
The Hercules Farneſe.
The Apollo Belvidere.
The Apollo De Medicis.
The Caracalla.
The fighting, and
Dying Gladiators.

For

* When the Duke of Richmond was on his travels in the year 1755; paſſing through Florence, he purchaſed the whole ſchool of Michael Angelo, in Plaiſter of Paris-Caſts, at a very conſiderable expence, with which, and other antiques, &c. that he brought with him to England; he opened a gallery at his houſe in Whitehall, for the inſtruction of young artiſts, to whom he annually beſtows two medals for the beſt model. This gallery was opened ſome years, previous to the eſtabliſhment of the Royal Academy, and continues to be the reſort of the curious, who are permitted to ſee it without any expence whatſoever.

For the Women.

The Venus De Medicis.
The Venus De Calipædia.
Diana.
Flora, and
The Graces.

We have ſelected the above as ſome of the moſt perfect of their kind, in their various expreſſions. Being, therefore, ſufficiently ſtudied in them, ſo as to adopt their ſeveral attitudes with eaſe, as well as to be acquainted with the juſtneſs and truth, of their principles, a performer cannot readily miſtake their ſubordinate combinations. In ſhort, that inflexion of body, and compoſition of limbs, ſo as not to encumber each other, or appear divided by ſharp, and ſudden angles, form the whole of *grace*, and give that *Je ne ſai quoi*, ſo much admired in the whole deportment of action.

As 'tis aſſiduity that, for the moſt part, conquers a profeſſion, no attention ſhould be wanting in a performer who aſpires to excel in that department of acting, his genius and inclination lead him to. On this principle then, it ſhould be his conſtant care to abſent himſelf as ſeldom as poſſible from the theatre, on ſuch nights that he does not perform; but

ſcarcely

ſcarcely on any account whatſoever, on thoſe when his *ſuperior* in the ſame caſt of parts, performs. We know how difficult it is to have this phraſe allowed, on account of that envy which in general pervades ſimilar departments of profeſſion; but taking it for granted, that the voice of the town, and the election of the managers, (who we believe every player will allow *know their own intereſt*) give a juſt preference to an actor's abilities; in ſuch a caſe, it becomes the indiſpenſable duty of an inferior in the ſame caſt, to make ſtrict obſervations on the voice, attitudes, and judgement of his ſuperior---imitate what he approves of by thoſe ſtandards of judging we have already laid down, and reject what he diſapproves of on the ſame ſcale. This ſpirit of emulation then, is the ſureſt method of lowering a rival's perfections---by riſing above them; it is at the ſame time, generous, manly, and uſeful,---and ſerves in infinitely better ſtead than thoſe *impotent carpings*, and *underhand ſlanders*, which (tho' the not unuſual buz of a green-room) are ever conſtrued by men of underſtanding, to be no more than the neceſſary taxes on the other's genius.

The late Mr. Powel, one of the joint Patentees of Covent-Garden theatre, who, whatever

whatever his theatrical defects were, could not be charged with either *diſinclination* or *inattention* to his profeſſion, was very laudably particular in this. We have known him come from Briſtol to London, in the very height of the theatrical ſeaſon, and when he could be very ill ſpared, to ſee Mr. Barry perform *King Lear*; his candour in ſpeaking of this celebrated performer afterwards, did him as much honour as his induſtry, for being aſked how he liked him, he anſwered, "So well, that after having gained his experience, if I can equal him, I ſhall be content."

We have hitherto but glanced at the benefits ariſing from a good *memory*, we ſhall now be a little more particular in ſpeaking of this ſubject. Tho' this quality is uſeful in all the liberal, as well as mechanical profeſſions, it perhaps ſerves a player in more ſtead than any; for tho' the mere memory does not include every other excellence, 'till this is obtained, there can be no foundation laid for any. He who does not perfectly remember what he has to ſay, in vain knows *how* he ſhould ſpeak it, and preposterous as 'tis, to ſuppoſe a perſon can play a part becauſe he has it by rote, it is not more ſo, than to imagine the moſt eminent

nent player could go through it tolerably who had it not.

We are generally pleaſed with the acting more than the reading of a play, why? becauſe the illuſion is more kept up in the former than the latter, and this illuſion is principally ſupported by the words being remembered perfectly. He who has often played a character, is quite eaſy as to the words, conſequently has *one* principal incumbrance off his mind, his attention then can be carried with double force to his feelings, and deportment; and hence he generally ſucceeds. In ſhort, the firſt ſtep towards throwing off a man's ſelf in any character is, the advantage he derives from recollection, --- elſe he every where feels himſelf the *player* rather than the *character*, not ſwelling with the paſſions of a hero, or melting with the pathos of a lover, but dreading the lapſes of his memory.

Could an actor but for a moment on this occaſion, transform himſelf into an auditor, he would ſee the deception of the ſcene ſo much broken in upon, and the glaring abſurdity of being *prompted in the paſſions*, that probably ſuch a view of himſelf would be the beſt means of reforming him in this particular,

particular, --- he would then conſider memory not only as the ſtorehouſe of words, but as the great ſource from whence he was to draw much of the beautiful, and ſublime in his profeſſion, and exclaiming with Churchill,

Would " hate thoſe careleſs blunders which recall
Suſpended ſenſe, and prove it fiction all."

There is one thing more relative to memory, on which the truth of repreſentation in a great meaſure depends, and that is the great neceſſity there is for a performer to remember the *ſubſtance* of every other perſons part, (particularly thoſe in the ſame ſcenes with himſelf) as well as the *words* of his own. This may ſeem like laying too heavy a burden on an actor, but the mode we have laid down in the preceding chapter, reſpecting an intimate and early acquaintance with the *dramatic claſſics*, will make this labour ſo light, that a ſingle reading of the play, when a part comes to be ſtudied, in all probability will be ſufficient; for he will be a young actor as long as he lives, who follows the young actor's practice of knowing when

when he is to ſpeak; only by the words of his cues.

" I admit the force of this reaſoning, ſays an actor, and very clearly ſee the advantages of memory, ——— but unfortunately for me I have the worſt *ſtudy* in the world." This is perhaps nine times in ten the *voice of idleneſs!* we readily grant, there are diſtinctions in memory; inſomuch, that what ſhall be one player's amuſement ſhall be another's drudgery; but this is in a great meaſure, if not radically, to be cured by frequent exerciſe. Let the player who has this defect not meaſure himſelf by the man who happens to have a good memory, elſe every ſurplus hour which he gives up to it---he will be tempted to call a ſacrifice, but on the contrary, redouble his diligence to gain an equality. Let him, for inſtance, beſtow ſuch time and attention on the general ſtudy of the ſtage, as are neceſſary to make him complete maſter of it. Let him, in thoſe particular parts he is in poſſeſſion of, lay out a larger portion of his time than others, and give himſelf taſks proportioned to his gradual improvement. All our faculties grow ſtronger by exerciſe, and the memory perhaps more than any. He, therefore, that complains of the want of this, complains

complains only of his want of induſtry, for though it might lie a little farther out of his reach than another's, let him but exert himſelf ſufficiently, and he acquires it.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

CONCLUSION.

WE have now gone thro' all the principal parts of education which we think neceſſary for forming an actor, who would look forward to the heights of his profeſſion, and wiſh to know it upon certain and liberal principles. We cannot cloſe this ſubject, however, without adding ſome obſervations which more immediately reſpect his private life and converſation.

We are previouſly aware, how divided the private and public characters of all men, ſhould be on account of the great difficulty of thoroughly knowing the former, as well as its general inapplication when known. With this reſtriction then before us, we ſhall only touch upon ſuch parts of the one as influence the other, leaving the reſt to that tribunal, where each man's actions ſhould be referred, (except ſuch as come under the cognizance of the magiſtrate)—his own conſcience.

Though the player, in ſome reſpect, like an Engliſh king, may be thought reſtrained "*from doing wrong*," ſeeing that he is not at liberty to alter, or amend the words of the poet,

poet, yet the grace and pathos, dignity and deportment with which he conveys them, give them force and meaning. An actor ſhould glow with the ſame fire that inſpires his author, and like a friendly and judicious critic, heighten by the comment of his judgement and feelings, thoſe paſſages which are written to convey inſtruction to an audience. But how are theſe to be attained? not *merely* by the rules we have already laid down in the preceding chapter; however theſe may aſſiſt, they are not altogether ſufficient. How then? why, by firſt feeling the influence and propriety of *virtue* in his own breaſt, (without which, he will proportionably want force in communicating it) by mixing with the moſt polite and intelligent company within his reach, keeping his abilities upon the conſtant ſtretch; and, in ſhort, poſſeſſing himſelf of that enthuſiaſm, which conſiders nothing arduous, nothing too dearly purchaſed which redounds to improvement, and the dignity of profeſſion.

The theatre has long been conſidered, by the generality of the world, (and we fear with too much juſtice) as being far from the *moſt perfect ſchool of virtue*. Without deſcending to particulars, thus much we aſſert, that the more a performer, by his life and converſation, contributes to ſupport this general character, (ab-

ſtracted from conſidering it in a moral ſenſe) the more he lays a clog upon his abilities, and throws an impediment in his purſuits. A diſſipated man, has many drawbacks on his talents, he proſtitutes his time, blunts his faculties, and impairs his conſtitution. If theſe are general barriers, then to ſucceſs, how much more ſo to *theatrical fame?* a miſtreſs of that coy and particular temper, who demands a ſacrifice to the graces as well as the arts, and who, previous to the ſurrender of her charms, will ſcaree abate an article in either.

A good moral character has even other advantages, which, ſtrictly ſpeaking, it has no right to, according to the principles of art; it often ſecures a performer of very moderate abilities, the countenance, protection, and eſteem of the audience. It is in the recollection of all thoſe who have been in the leaſt intimate with the ſtage, that ſome who have lately quitted it, either by death, or reſignation, and others now on it, are examples of this kind; for ſuch is the powerful force of *virtue*, independent of its particular influence on the mind of the poſſeſſor, it raiſes admirers in every clime; nor has any body of people, perhaps, ever been ſo abſolutely debauched, but what they have paid this compliment to her ſhrine, except where their particular

ticular intereſts with-held them. Hear this then, ye ſons and daughters of the ſtage! and ſee how neceſſary it is, even in a *political* light, to extend ſome regards to *a good private character*. Let not the force of example on the one ſide, nor the ſtigmas of ignorance on the other, miſlead you; "a good name in man or woman, is the immediate jewel of their ſouls;" this gives the profeſſion of a player dignity and reſpect, whilſt the want of it covers a churchman with diſgrace.

Though much reſts with a performer, in avoiding a life of diſſipation, there is one article of *managerial arrangement*, which has, in a great meaſure, contributed to it; and that is, *the eſtabliſhment* of *benefit nights*. This cuſtom, we believe, originated about the beginning of this century, and was, at firſt, only meant as a compliment to capital performers, to reward them after the fatigues of the ſeaſon; by degrees it grew more general, and probably the managers ſeeing that, on thoſe nights, there was the particular intereſt of the player joined to the accidental profits of the night, they adopted it as a ſtanding rule of the theatre, to take the beſt of the ſeaſon for themſelves, and parcel out the remainder amongſt the performers, according to rank, ſometimes according to favouritiſm. The players (particularly thoſe under the firſt claſs) being under this predicament, curtailed

in their weekly ſalaries, and forced to make them up, by endeavouring for good benefits, were obliged to make as univerſal an acquaintance as they could. In this acquaintance, they were not only led into expences, but into many errors and diſſipations. Under the expectation of *annual favours*, 'tis not always that a man otherwiſe independent properly ſupports his character, how much leſs a man, whom the principal exiſtence of himſelf and family too often depend upon them; in ſhort, this arrangement opened the door to many bad habits. *Benefit hunting*, became, in time, more attended to than the real duties of the profeſſion; and the ſame pains that a performer often took to qualify himſelf for a *bon vivant*, would have made him an ornament to the ſtage.

This cuſtom ſtill continues; but as Shakeſpeare ſays, on another occaſion, "it is a cuſtom would be more honoured in the *breach* than in the *performance*."

There is another article that reſts with the managers, which, if put on its former footing, would, in our opinion, contribute, if not to the morals, at leaſt to the poliſh and refinement of the theatre; what we allude to, is permitting a ſelect number of gentlemen behind the ſcenes. We are aware of the indiſcriminate uſe of this permiſſion,

and

and of the many diſturbances and impropriеties it has occaſionally introduced; but if a certain number of ſubſcribers were only permitted by rotation, or any number of men of faſhion, who would not encumber the buſineſs of the ſcenes, we are poſitive ſome ſuch regulation would have peculiar benefits.

Formerly, when this indulgence was ſparingly uſed, it had a good effect, as many performers, who probably had few other opportunities of mingling with men of faſhion, and obſerving on their *manners* and *deportment*, caught that habitual eaſe and breeding which theory can never alone inculcate; this intercourſe very often extended beyond the Green Room; and thoſe players, who had it in their power to recommend themſelves by their private behaviour, formed many valuable and uſeful acquaintances.

For though the quickneſs of familiar converſation will not admit of an attention to that accuracy which is required in ſtudy, yet there are in thoſe intercourſes, a certain ſuperior ſpirit, and genuine eloquence, which, perhaps, are a better help to the improvement of ſtyle, and a more enlivening model for imitation, than the united efforts of the cloſet. Thoſe happy turns, and emphatical ſprightly phraſes, which are ſtruck out by the colliſion of animated converſation, and

that

that graceful dignity of manner which are peculiar to thoſe who move in the higher ſpheres of life, will catch the attention of him who is familiarly accuſtomed to them, and inſenſibly become his own; for, as our ſenſes naturally retain the print of images commonly preſented to them, ſo our language and behaviour, almoſt unavoidably, take a tincture from thoſe with whom we uſually converſe.

To this Wilkes, the celebrated comedian, (that firſt rate model of his time for theatrical elegance and breeding) was principally indebted; for as no player, perhaps, ever lived more amongſt gentlemen of the firſt rank, ſo no man was ever leſs the player on the ſtage. To the many teſtimonies left us of this, we ſhall add that of a gentleman lately dead, who has ever been conſidered by his acquaintance, no leſs a critic in the *bon-ton* than the world of letters; from this gentleman, we were informed, that whatever Wilkes did on the ſtage, let it be never ſo trifling, whether it conſiſted in putting on his gloves, or taking out his watch, lolling on his cane, or taking ſnuff, every thing was marked with ſuch an eaſe of breeding and manner; every thing told ſo ſtrongly the involuntary motion of a gentleman, that it was impoſſible to conſider the cha-

character he repreſented in any other light than that of a reality.

It may now, perhaps, be thought, that in theſe inſtructions, we have deſcended into too many minute particulars; but it muſt be remembered, that 'tis by a combination of theſe, perfection is to be acquired; for ſo various and *petite* are the qualifications of an actor, that the ſmalleſt omiſſion, in ſome reſpect, deranges the buſineſs of the moſt impaſſioned ſcenes; whereas, on the contrary, it is by a minute and univerſal knowledge of any profeſſion, names are lifted into notice, and bear the ſtamp of excellence: it was the conſciouſneſs of this made Michael Angelo exclaim, (upon one of his pupils wondering how a few touches he had given a ſtatue of his, could make ſo ſurpriſing a change) "however ſlight theſe touches may appear, ſuch make the difference between you and Michael Angelo."

We have now reached the limits of this treatiſe, in which, willing as we were to be as diffuſe as poſſible, we are ſenſible of omitting many other minutiæ of theatrical education; not that they have eſcaped us, but on account of the difficulty, indeed the impoſſibility of committing them ſingly,

and

and with a preciſion capable of being followed on paper. In theſe inſtances, Shakeſpeare gives the rule; "Let your own diſcretion be your tutor;" and the player, who wants this for his guide, will look for advice in vain on the moſt crowded ſcale of written inſtructions.

FINIS.

MVSEVM BRITANNICVM